

**IN DEFENCE OF PURE ISLAM:
CONSERVATIVE-PROGRESSIVE DEBATE
WITHIN MUHAMMADIYAH**

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree. This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated.

Pradana Boy ZTF

ABSTRACT

In Defence of Pure Islam: The Conservative-Progressive Debate within Muhammadiyah

This research is about the contestation between conservative and progressive groups within Muhammadiyah. Although the organisation has long been known for its promotion of 'rational', open and contextual understandings of Islam, during the past decade, it has been seen as becoming more conservative. This growing conservatism has galvanised progressive-minded Muhammadiyah members to push more boldly for the adoption of new and innovative Islamic thought. Institutionally, the *Majlis Tarjih* (the Tarjih Council) led the campaign for a new orientation, particularly to solving legal problems. Part of the Majlis Tarjih's new stance involved heavily revising Islamic legal and philosophical methodologies as a reaction to conservatism. In addition, a number of 'non-structural' progressive groups emerged within Muhammadiyah, the best of known of which is JIMM. Interestingly, the promotion of progressive Islamic thought prompted a conservative backlash, pushing Muhammadiyah even further to the right. Consequently, there has been increasing doctrinal tension between the two groups.

This thesis describes and analyses the conservative and progressive views on two key issues: religious pluralism; and approaches to disseminating new Islamic thought (*manhaj tarjih*). It reveals how both groups show significant and growing differences in responding to these issues. Historically, the emergence of conservative group is influenced by three factors: politics, ideology, and education. In contrast, the rise of progressive groups was motivated by two main factors: Muhammadiyah's increasing conservatism and the perceived intellectual stagnation within the organization. Furthermore, the conservative and progressive contestation has moved from having an open doctrinal and intellectual character to being increasingly hegemonic on the part of anti-liberal forces and punitive for progressive activists. Hence, progressives find themselves marginalised within and repressed by the organisation's conservative-dominated power structures. In terms of popular support, conservatives have a greater ability to attract a wider Muhammadiyah audience compared to the progressives. Conversely, progressives lack a popular basis and this has made them vulnerable within the organisation.

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When first I came to the Australian National University (ANU) in January 2005, I planned to write a sub-thesis on relations between Islamic law and the dissemination of civil society ideas in Indonesia. However, I changed my mind when in July 2005 I attended the Muhammadiyah Congress in Malang and observed a number of events which led me to conclude that Islamic conservatism is ascendant. The growing conservatism in Muhammadiyah was surprising given that organization's nature as a modernist Islamic movement known for its promotion of open and tolerant Islamic understanding.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Global Conservatism Resurgence.....	2
The Shift from Moderate to Conservative.....	5
Significance of the Study.....	10
Scope of the Study.....	13
Previous Studies.....	14
Method.....	18
CHAPTER II: THE DISCOURSE OF MODERATE, PROGRESSIVE AND RADICAL ISLAM IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA.....	21
Categorizing Indonesian Islam.....	22
Moderate Islam.....	25
- Muslims' Views.....	25
- Westerners' Views.....	31
Liberal-Progressive Islam	34
Radical Fundamentalist Islam.....	42
- Divergence.....	48
Implications.....	51

CHAPTER III: THE GENEALOGY OF CONSERVATIVE AND PROGRESSIVE ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN MUHAMMADIYAH.....	55
Muhammadiyah: Modernism under Question.....	57
A Vicious Circle of Conservatism and Progressivism.....	70
Conservatism: Factors of Emergence.....	81
CHAPTER IV: PROGRESSIVE ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN MUHAMMADIYAH.....	91
Religious Pluralism: A Theoretical Framework.....	92
Religious Pluralism: Muhammadiyah’s Experience.....	94
Thematic Exegesis on Pluralism.....	102
Pluralism and Social Interactions.....	105
Manhaj Tarjih and PPI.....	115
CHAPTER V: CONSERVATIVES’ RESPONSES TO PROGRESSIVE ISLAMIC THOUGHT.....	128
General Response to Progressivism.....	131
- Incompatibility.....	131
- Destroying Muhammadiyah’s Pillars.....	133
- Supporting Western Interests.....	137
- “Laisa Minna (Not Our Group)”.....	139
Religious Pluralism.....	142
Between Dynamic and Hegemony.....	150
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION.....	158
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	165
GLOSSARY.....	182

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The most recent Muhammadiyah congress¹ held in July 2005 witnessed a significant change within the organization. Muhammadiyah shifted from a moderate way of thinking to a more conservative one. This shift is evident from several issues which arose during the congress. First, the *muktamirin* (pl. Arabic, literally means participants of the congress) were critical of contemporary issues such as pluralism, multiculturalism, liberalism, and gender equality.² Second, the ascendance of Din Syamsuddin to the Muhammadiyah chairmanship was viewed by many observers as a victory for conservatives.³ Last of all, progressive scholars were ousted from the Muhammadiyah central executive board. Interestingly, while the position of progressives in Muhammadiyah is critical,⁴ they are struggling to advance liberal Islamic thought within Muhammadiyah.

These events showed how Muhammadiyah's last congress became a forum for heated debate between conservative and progressive groups. While the three developments mentioned above were formal results, outside the congress, a similar situation prevailed. In several sessions, liberal Islamic agenda were

¹ The Muhammadiyah's congress, better known as *Muktamar* (Arabic) is held five-yearly. The last congress was its 45th and was held in Muhammadiyah University of Malang. The main agenda of the *Muktamar* is the election of Muhammadiyah's central executive board for the next term. Other significant and crucial issues whether organizational, religious, social or even political are also discussed in this event.

² Abduh Hisyam, a participant of congress from Kebumen conveyed the outcomes to a group of Muhammadiyah young generation during the congress.

³ William Liddle, "Year One of Yudhoyono-Kalla Duumvirate" *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 41 (2005), 325-40.

⁴ Interview with Zuly Qodir, in Yogyakarta, 20 September 2006.

emphatically rejected.⁵ At the congress bazaar, there was a meeting place named the *Pojok Anti Liberal* (Anti-Liberal Corner) where conservative activists gathered. There were also pamphlets calling on Muhammadiyah members to return to the “pure Muhammadiyah” and to “sterilize” the organization from liberal viruses. Consequently, many observers concluded that Islamic conservatism now dominates Muhammadiyah.⁶

Scholars believe that Muhammadiyah’s rising conservatism is one of the manifestations of radical Islam in Indonesia. Merle Ricklefs wrote of growing conservatism in Indonesian Islam and recognised that it was not limited to Muhammadiyah, but was rather part of a wider contestation between conservative and liberal Muslims. He sees Muhammadiyah as the first battlefield where conservatives have gained their victory. In the months following the Muhammadiyah congress, the conservatives again demonstrated their dominance when the Indonesian Clerics Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia* or MUI) issued eleven fatawas (rulings), including a ban on liberalism, pluralism and multiculturalism in Indonesia.⁷

Global Conservatism Resurgence

Rising conservatism and radicalism in Indonesia is part of a global resurgence across the Muslim world. In the Arab regions, the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as Iranian president, the emergence of Hizbullah in Lebanon and the victory of Hamas in Palestine in the last election is a clear

⁵ See “Maunya Kampanye, Jadinya Kelabakan” www.sabili.com

⁶ Based on my personal observation during the Muhammadiyah’s last congress in 2005.

⁷ Merle Ricklefs, “Islam on March”, *Financial Review*, 2 September 2005.

indication of how powerful radical groups in Muslim world are. This is also the case in Central Asia. The emergence of Islamist groups in Central Asia dates back to the 1980s, where Islamic resurgence took place mainly in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Ferghana Valley.⁸ In the 1990s, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Islamist groups have reemerged.⁹ Before its fall in 2001, Afghanistan was ruled by the ultra-conservative Islamic regime, the Taliban. The Taliban is a fundamentalist regime and as such, exercised conservative practices such as prohibiting women to be involved in the public sphere, including having education.

These events reflect an upsurge of conservative and radical tendencies in contemporary Islam thought that is described by Olivier Roy as neo-fundamentalism, meaning a “common intellectual matrix that can be nevertheless manifested in various political attitudes.”¹⁰ Roy continues: “If all radical Islamic groups are indisputably neofundamentalist in religious terms, many fundamentalist elements are simply conservative and law-abiding...”¹¹

Many factors have triggered the phenomenon. Radical groups have an ability to attract a larger Muslim audience through the selection of issues of common concerns. Peter Mandaville observes: “the ability of radical groups to articulate themes that resonate at times with large portions of worldwide Muslim

⁸ Shirin Akiner, “The Politization of Islam in Central Asia,” in *Religion, State and Society*, Vol. 31: 2 (2003), 97-122.

⁹ Gregory Massel, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia 1919-1929* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974). For a more recent and comprehensive discussion on radical Islam in Central Asia, see Vitaly V Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

¹⁰ Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam, The Search for A New Ummah* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2004), 232.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 232.

audience needs to be regarded as one of the chief obstacle to the wider dissemination of civil, pluralist Islam.”¹²

Rising conservatism in the Muslim world could also be identified as a reaction to globalization. Muslim and Western observers alike see that globalization elicits different responses. Fauzi M Najjar, for instance, classifies the Arab intelligentsia’s response to globalization into three groups. The first is those who tend to reject globalization and see it as “the highest form of imperialism”. The second group sees globalization positively as an unintended situation that Muslims have to engage with. This group believes in the advantages of globalization in terms of knowledge, science and technology, “without necessarily losing their Arab-Islamic cultural individuality”. The third group promotes what is called “positive neutrality” in which globalization cannot be entirely rejected or accepted.¹³ In this context, the rising conservatism can also be linked to the Muslims’ attitude to globalization.

However, conservatism is not always a product of external factors. It is also a result of dialectical relationships between Islamic doctrines and Muslims’ way of thinking. In certain Muslim circles, there is a belief that some practices and interpretations of Islamic doctrines have deviated from true Islamic teachings and a return to puritan Islamic practices and interpretation is needed. Such a response also emerges when there is a tendency among Muslims to adopt western ways of thinking in Islamic context. In other words, internally, the rise of

¹² Peter Mandaville, “Sufis and Salafis: The Political Discourse of Transnational Islam”, in Robert W. Hefner (ed), *Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism, Contestation and Democratization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹³ Fauzi M Najjar, “The Arab, Islam and Globalization” *Middle East Policy* Vol, XII: 3 (2005), 91-106.

conservatism can also be linked to the internal debate among Muslims as to how Islam should respond to modernization. According to William Shepard, modernization has produced secularist, Islamist and traditionalist tendencies among Muslims.¹⁴

The Shift from Moderate to Conservative

The rising conservatism in Indonesian Islam has surprised many observers who have previously considered Indonesia as a home to moderate Islam. The rise of conservatism and radicalism in Indonesian Islam can be linked –but not limited to-- the fall of Suharto in 1998. Following Suharto's resignation, a number of extremist and conservative Muslim groups have emerged.¹⁵ Considering Suharto's resignation that has paved a more open and more democratic path for Indonesian politics, the birth or rebirth of radical Islamic groups was natural. William R. Liddle once predicted that in a more open political climate, scriptural expression of Islam would come into existence.¹⁶ The emergence of radical and conservative groups is manifested in the political agenda of those groups, rejecting progressive interpretations and promoting a more puritan understanding of Islam.

It is not uncommon though for groups can to simultaneously have both tendencies: they promote conservative and scriptural interpretations of Islam,

¹⁴ William Shepard, "The Diversity of Islamic Thought: Toward a Typology", in Suha Taji-Farouki and Basheer M Nafi, *Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 61-103.

¹⁵ Jusuf Wanandi, "Islam in Indonesia: Its History, Development and Future Challenges" *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol. 9: 2 (2002), 104-112.

¹⁶ William R. Liddle, "Media Dakwah Scripturalism: One Form of Islamic Political Thought and Action in New Order Indonesia", in *Toward a New Paradigm: Recent Development in Indonesian Islamic Thought*, edited by Mark R Woodward (Arizona: Arizona State University, 1996), 323-56.

while using politics to achieve their goals. The first implementation is obvious when Islamist groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and Justice and Prosperous Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* or PKS) are analysed. While HTI, the revival of the Caliphate, see the current regime's political practices as un-Islamic and involvement in democratic processes is rejected, PKS has more intensive involvement in state political processes.

Salim and Azra write, the resurgence of radical Islamic movements in Indonesia is attested by four main facts.¹⁷ First is the establishment of numerous Islamic parties in Post-Suharto Indonesia. This feature signifies an important shift in Indonesia Islam's political paradigm. In the first election since the fall of New Order regime, on 7 June 1999, there were 48 political parties participating in the election, fifteen of which were Islamic parties.

Secondly, the emergence of hardline Muslim groups such as the Islamic Defender's Front (*Front Pembela Islam* or FPI) led by Habib Rizieq, The Council of Jihad Fighters of Indonesia (*Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* or MMI) led by Abu Bakar Baasyir, and Jihad Warrior (*Laskar Jihad*). Among these groups, FPI is notorious for raiding night clubs and bars. Its goal is "the full implementation of Islamic shari'a law."¹⁸ As a radical group, FPI adopts a very strict interpretation of Islamic teachings. Habib Rizieq, FPI leader, suggests implementation of the most inconsiderate interpretations of Islamic law.¹⁹

¹⁷ Arskal Salim and Azymardi Azra (eds.), *Shari'a and Politics in Modern Indonesia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2003), 1-2.

¹⁸ <http://www.indonesia-relief.org/mod.php?mod=bank&op=infobank&bankid=37>

¹⁹ Conflict hits Indonesia hard, *Boston News*, May 9, 2005.

Thirdly, the increasing demands from a number of regions in Indonesia to implement shari'a law. Following Suharto's resignation, a number of regions in Indonesia decided to implement shari'a law as part of their legislation. Today, there are approximately twenty four provinces and districts with shari'a-inspired bylaws. Among those regions, Aceh is the first Indonesian province that demanded for the formalization of shari'a as its law.²⁰ After shari'a was formally implemented in Aceh, other regions in other parts of Indonesia also demand the same project.²¹

Lastly, the growing popularity of hardline Islamic media. The emergence of hardline Islamic groups is often accompanied by publications produced by or sympathetic to these groups. *Sabili* is the highest selling conservative magazine. This magazine was published underground during the Suharto period. Another such magazine is *Suara Hidayatullah* published by an Islamic group that also adopts very strict interpretation of Islam. More recently, *Suara Hidayatullah* has been very popular especially Adian Husaini's *Catatan Akhir Pekan* (Weekend Note or CAP) which promotes ultra-conservative interpretations of Islam. In many occasions, Husaini's CAPs are responses to progressive Muslims which are also usually published in several Indonesian media. Hizb ut-Tahrir publishes a bulletin called *al-Islam* and a magazine called *al-Wa'ie*. Both are distributed freely in major mosques in Indonesia during Friday prayers. Recently, a group of young Muslim intellectuals named INSIST also published a journal called *Islamika*

²⁰ See Laws No. 44 Year 1999 about the Implementation of Aceh as Special Territory (*Penyelegaraan Keistimewaan DI Aceh*) and Laws No. 18 Year 2001 about Aceh's Special Autonomy (*Otonomi Khusus DI Aceh*).

²¹ [url]<http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/mbmtempo/free/nasional.html>[/url]

which also promotes conservative interpretation of Islam. This group is dominated by the Gontor alumni and is recognised for its rejection of religious pluralism, hermeneutics and Western-style Islamic studies.

All of these issues indicate that conservative Islam is increasing in Indonesia. Moreover, conservative tendencies are also evident in the two most influential Islamic movements in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. Many believe that conservative Islamic thought in these two Islamic movements has intensified.²² In Nahdlatul Ulama, the conservatism tendency, according to Mas'ud Adnan, a board member of East Java NU, can be seen in the supportive stance of NU's Central Board for the shari'a-based Anti-pornography Bill²³. Other evidence is the involvement of NU's clerics in National Imam Council (*Dewan Imamah Nusantara* or DIN).²⁴

During the 2004 presidential election, the conservative tendency in Nahdlatul Ulama was evident from the fatwa of a panel of NU's clerics, though not the central board, about the ban of women to run for a political leadership. Although politics was the main motive behind this fatwa, it is clear that the ruling was based on conservative Islamic thought which prohibits women becoming leaders. Later, one of the most obvious indications of conservatism in Nahdlatul Ulama' was the rejection of Liberal Islam Network (*Jaringan Islam Liberal* or JIL)

²² See Merle Ricklefs, "Islam on the March" *Financial Review*, 2 September 2005. Also M. Mas'ud Adnan, "NU Mulai Miring ke Kanan?", (NU starts to be Conservative?), *Jawa Pos*, 28 March 2006. Also, Pradana Boy ZTF, "Kaum Progresif di Muhammadiyah Mati Suri" (The Fate of Muhammadiyah's Progressive Wing), *Media Indonesia*, 21 October 2005.

²³ *Jawa Pos*, 19 March 2006.

²⁴ Mas'ud Adnan, "NU Mulai Miring ke Kanan?" (NU starts to be Conservative?), *Jawa Pos*, 28 March 2006. Dewan Imamah Nusantara is a group of Muslim elders, including leader of Langitan Islamic Boarding School. This group was set up in Musyawarah Ulama Nasional on 22 December 2005 Pasuruan East Java.

by NU's scholars in its last congress.²⁵ Liberal Islamic thought was promoted by NU's younger generation through many labels such as Liberal Islam, Emancipatory Islam, Leftist Islam, Indigenous Islam, International Islam, Post-Traditional Islam and Post-religion Islam.²⁶ However, they face increasing resistance and challenges. Khamami Zada writes that such challenges from conservative NU ulama' will be the most important factor for the future of this movement. Progressive Islamic thought in NU has encountered difficulties since the election of Hasyim Muzadi as chairman in 1999. Many of the young NU generation see his leadership as victory for conservative ulama.

As has been mentioned earlier, in Muhammadiyah, the election of Din Syamsuddin as its chairman is also believed as turning point "to the right by that organization".²⁷ Din's predecessor, Syafii Maarif is a moderate Muslim who was open to the introduction of contemporary Islamic thought in the organization. Din's position has not yet defined, but early indications suggest he is closer to the conservative Islamic agenda rather than to the progressive one. The ousting of several prominent progressive figures from Muhammadiyah's central board which he leads is one manifestation of this. More interestingly, while warning several younger Muhammadiyah activists not to be too liberal and progressive,²⁸ Din appointed conservative polemicists such as Adian Husaini and Adnin Armas as

²⁵ Fatwa NU Tentang Sesatnya Islam Liberal, <http://islamlib.com/id/index.php?page=article&id=784>

²⁶ Rizqon Khamami, "The NU convention and nonconventional Islam", *The Jakarta Post*, 24 November 2004.

²⁷ William Liddle, "Year One of Yudhoyono-Kalla Duumvirate" *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* (December 2005), 7.

²⁸ Din Syamsuddin, "Preface" in Syamsul Hidayat and Sudarno Shobron (eds.) *Pemikiran Muhammadiyah: Respons Terhadap Liberalisasi Pemikiran Islam* (Muhammadiyah's Thought: Response to the Liberalization of Islamic Thought) (Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press, 2005).

members of Muhammadiyah committees. Muhammadiyah's shift to conservative was also clear from its last congress in 2005. Considering Muhammadiyah's innovation in women's participation through the founding of Aisyiyah in 1917, it is surprising that the issue of gender equality created a heated debate at the congress.

This study is about the dynamic of current thought in Muhammadiyah and not a study of Muhammadiyah history, of which there are already many. However, among those studies, none discuss the conflicting views of conservative and progressive thought within the organization which has gained considerable momentum and attention in the last decade.

Significance of the Study

In the Islamic studies discourse in Indonesia, it is generally accepted that Muhammadiyah is representative of a modernist interpretation of Islam. As a 'modernist' movement, Muhammadiyah's modernity is based, among other things, on its attempts to "rationalize" many aspects of Islamic teaching, so that Muslims follow and perform Islamic teaching, especially in terms of Islamic law, with authoritative knowledge and high self-consciousness. Muhammadiyah insists that *ijtihad* or reasoned interpretation is still desirable. It advocates *ittiba'* (an adherence of one imam's teachings that are based on deep knowledge) rather than *taqlid* that is seen as merely adhering to one of the four of Islamic law schools. In terms of education, Muhammadiyah has made a significant contribution to the country. Muhammadiyah combines a religious education style with a secular one.

The religious style was run by local indigenous people, while the secular was run by the Dutch colonial. Muhammadiyah's contribution is also significant through its network of schools, colleges and universities across the nation. Kuntowijoyo underscored that it is hard to imagine that new middle classes will emerge in Indonesia in the absence of Muhammadiyah's education institutions.²⁹

Almost all studies on Muhammadiyah acknowledge these achievements. However, there has been a shift within Muhammadiyah regarding the development of Islamic thought with many believing that Muhammadiyah is experiencing stagnation and see its reluctance to accept new discourses in Islamic thought such on pluralism, multiculturalism, religious tolerance, gender equality and hermeneutics as evidence of this. Therefore, rather opening up to intellectual ferment, Muhammadiyah tends to produce Islamic conservatism. The rise of progressive intellectuals in Muhammadiyah such as Syafi'i Ma'arif, Amin Abdullah, Moeslim Abdurrahman, Munir Mulkhan, Syafiq A Mughni, Ahmad Jainuri, Hamim Ilyas and several younger intellectual such as Sukidi, Zuly Qodir, Zakiyuddin Baidhawi, Ahmad Fuad Fanani, is perceived as a threat by some influential groups.

Although during the last ten years figures such as Amin Abdullah, Moeslim Abdurrahman and Munir Mulkhan were on Muhammadiyah central board, and Syafii Maarif as chairman, resistance to them spread when the Tarjih Council disseminated liberal interpretation of Islam especially when it published a book on interreligious relationships. In addition, the support that these figures

²⁹ Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam: Interpretasi Untuk Aksi* (Bandung: Mizan, 1991).

granted to *Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah* (JIMM) has strengthened Muhammadiyah members' belief that they could be a threat for the organization.

For this reason, conservative and progressive groups respond differently to key issues. Many theoretical explanations can be proposed to explain this phenomenon. I argue, genealogically conservative and progressive thought emerges from Muhammadiyah's puritan doctrines. Muhammadiyah describes its puritanism in terms of purification and dynamism. Progressives seek to practise dynamism or vitality while conservatives adhere to purification without sufficient concern to dynamism. That is, conservatives tend to preserve Muhammadiyah's older doctrines and reject contemporary issue without rigorous assessment on its prospect and challenge, while progressives actively respond to new developments and attempt to implement them in Muhammadiyah.

Specifically, there are three main factors contributing to the emergence of conservative thought in Muhammadiyah, namely political, ideological and educational. The rise of progressive groups, on the other hand, mainly relates to the intellectual stagnation and the growing conservatism in the organization. The existence of these two competing models of interpretation, as a new development in Muhammadiyah, has not been studied thoroughly. This study is the first study on the subject. Most research on Muhammadiyah focuses on its modernism, but little attentions have been paid on its conservative inclinations. Due to technical constraints, this study will not examine all aspects of the conservative-progressive debate. However, it is hoped that this study will stimulate further and more comprehensive studies on this subject.

Scope of the Study

The central focus of this study is the dynamic of conservative and progressive Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah. The conservatives urge Muhammadiyah to keep its puritan position and prevent Islam from outside influences which may spoil the purity of Islamic teachings. Progressives attempt to promote new and flexible responses to contemporary issues in Islamic discourses. The existence of opposing ideals, result in tension and mistrust. Two main issues will be examined in this study, namely religious pluralism, and *Manhaj Tarjih* (Tarjih Methodology in Islamic thought) as they are pivotal points of dispute in Muhammadiyah.

Conservative and progressive views regarding these two issues are diametrically opposed and it is this issue which will be discussed in the following chapters. Progressives expect of Muhammadiyah to respond to contemporary issues since the organization is recognised as one which promote Islamic reform and it should be open to contemporary discourses. Chapter 3 will outline in more detail one of the important forces leading to the inception of the progressive group, that is the stagnation of Muhammadiyah intellectualism and the growing conservatism at senior level. The progressives who became influential in the Tarjih Council³⁰ under Amin Abdullah (1995-2000) sought to address this

³⁰ Tarjih Council is a division in Muhammadiyah that is mainly responsible for solving legal-related problems. For a very long period (1927-1995) the council kept its role as Muhammadiyah's "fatwa body". To many Muhammadiyah members, the council role that emphasized on legal-related issues has made the organization negligent to other aspects of Islamic thought. Partly for this reason, new orientation of the council is formulated. Chapter 3 will give more detail on this subject.

stagnation. These attempts have resulted in the birth of Tarjih Methods on the Dissemination of Islamic Thought, which includes the adoption of *irfani* (intuitive) method; a point at which conservatives show their resistance.

Previous Studies

Numerous works have been written on Muhammadiyah, ranging from such matters as Islamic thought, theology, Islamic law methodology, history and politics. The works include:

1. Alfian, *Muhammadiyah: The Political Behaviour of A Modernist Organization Under Dutch Colonialism* (1969). As one of the earlier generation research on Muhammadiyah, by and large, this study can be seen as a relatively comprehensive study on Muhammadiyah and politics. This study's emphasis is on the political role and behaviour of Muhammadiyah in relation to Dutch occupation.
2. James L Peacock, *Purifying the Faith: The Muhammadiyah Movement in Indonesian Islam* (1978). This study can be classified as an earlier generation study on Muhammadiyah. The main focus of this study is Muhammadiyah as a mass organization including educational and social activities that it runs. Peacock reported that Muhammadiyah is a puritan Islam movement that is dominated by puritan Muslims. Peacock's research is no longer able to describe Muhammadiyah's current situation in which as puritanism doctrines in Muhammadiyah has been highly debated by conservatives and progressives.

3. Mitsuo Nakamura, *The Crescent Arises Over the Banyan Tree: A Study of The Muhammadijah Movement in Central Javanese Town* (1978). This book is originated from research in the small town of Yogyakarta, Kotagede. It shows that Muhammadiyah is representative of the processes of religious change (Islamization) that occurred as the result of interaction between many elements of local tradition and Islam. This study can be employed as a conceptual framework on the purification of Islam from local cultural influences. However, Nakamura's thesis cannot be referred if the processes of purification occur in peasant society.
4. Ahmad Jainuri, *The Muhammadiyah Movement in Twentieth-Century Indonesia: A Socio-religious Study* (1990). The main argument of this thesis is that change and continuity are the most remarkable feature of Islam in Indonesia. The formation of Muhammadiyah in 1912 can be pointed as one of those changes.
5. M. Sirajudin Syamsuddin, *Religion and Politics in Islam: The Case of Muhammadiyah in Indonesia's New Order* (1991). This study pays great attention to the relationship between Islam and politics. This broader concept is applied to Muhammadiyah and its political role during New Order Indonesia. However, Muhammadiyah's political dynamic has been developing so rapidly during the last decade, particularly as a number of political parties who claimed to have ideological proximity to Muhammadiyah emerged. One of main findings of this study that identifies Muhammadiyah's political doctrine as allocative politics, should be further revisited.

6. Arbiyah Lubis, *Pemikiran Muhammadiyah dan Muhammad Abduh: Suatu Studi Perbandingan* (Muhammadiyah's and Muhammad Abduh's Thought: A Comparative Study) (1993). As Muhammadiyah is often described as being influenced by Muhammad Abduh's ideas, this study provides a relatively comprehensive study on the differences and similarities between Muhammadiyah's and Muhammad Abduh's thought.
7. Alwi Shihab, *The Muhammadiyah Movement and Its Controversy with Christian Mission in Indonesia* (1995). This study is mainly on the history of Muhammadiyah, particularly its inception. One of important findings is that Muhammadiyah's emergence can not be separated from Christian missionary activities in Indonesia. As its title suggests it is a comprehensive explanation on the steps that Muhammadiyah has taken in challenging Christian missionary. Much of this study is devoted to Muhammadiyah history with perhaps too little on the core topic. The thesis that Muhammadiyah was formed as an effort against Christian missionary penetration in Indonesia is weak, as Muhammadiyah's reluctance toward other religions emerge in the period of ideologization which is post-Dahlan's period.
8. Saifullah, *Gerak Politik Muhammadiyah dalam Masyumi* (Muhammadiyah's Political Movements within Masyumi). As far as Muhammadiyah's political role within Masyumi is concerned, this study provides discussion on how Muhammadiyah played its role in Masyumi.
9. Abdul Munir Mulkhan's book *Islam Murni dalam Masyarakat Petani* (Pure Islam in Peasant Society, 2000) was derived from his Ph.D dissertation at

Gadjah Mada University Yogyakarta. This study focuses on the shift of Muhammadiyah's behaviour in confrontation of syncretism and local tradition. The most important finding of this research is that there are four variants of Muhammadiyah and the thesis of *pribumisasi* (indigenisation) of Islam. The four variants are: Islam Murni (Pure Islam) also known as *al-Ikhlâs*, Kiai Dahlan Muhammadiyah, neo-traditionalist and neo-syncretic.

10. Following the emergence of liberal thinking, a number of publications on this issue can also be found: Syamsul Hidayat and Sudarno Shobron (eds), *Pemikiran Muhammadiyah: Respons Terhadap Liberalisasi Islam* (Muhammadiyah's Thought: Response to the Liberalization of Islam), Imron Nasri (eds), *Pluralisme dan Liberalisme: Pergolakan Pemikiran anak Muda Muhammadiyah* (Pluralism and Liberalism: the Dynamic of Muhammadiyah's Younger Generation's Thought), Moeslim Abdurrahman, *Muhammadiyah sebagai Tenda Kultural* (Muhammadiyah as Cultural Tent).

Among the studies mentioned above, Munir Mulkhan's work is the most relevant. While other studies tend to explore the historical aspect of Muhammadiyah, Mulkhan's study is about contemporary phenomenon in Muhammadiyah. He describes Muhammadiyah's current circumstances. Mulkhan's study also depicts the plurality of Muhammadiyah's identities and these findings on the different Muhammadiyah types are important to understanding internal dynamics. Although many believe that Muhammadiyah is *dzu wujuh* (having multi faces), there is a tendency to recognise only one face of Muhammadiyah and in so doing

other dimensions are overlooked. Mulkhan's text offers an innovative research and thought that should be followed in other studies. This study, therefore, confirms Mulkhan's finding on the multiplicity of Muhammadiyah's nature in its Islamic thought.

Method

This research is a qualitative since it relies on interpretation of events and discourses in Muhammadiyah. Given the focus of this research, most of the data was collected from Indonesia. The analysis draws on research as to the views of prominent progressive scholars as well as conservative leaders. This research includes both theoretical overviews and empirical investigations. The theoretical overview is commenced with bibliographical research. This is done through a review of books, articles, papers and academic theses containing relevant information. The literature review provides a conceptual framework for this research. Empirical investigations have been conducted through fieldwork, the majority of which consist of observations, documentary research, and comprehensive interviews. Observation was mostly carried out through the monitoring of printed as well as electronic media pertinent to the subject of study. Documentary research is achieved by analysing material produced by both parties on a number of issues.

As for fieldwork, I have conducted formal interviews with 16 conservative and progressive figures in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Bandung, Malang, Surakarta and Sidoarjo. In addition, I have conducted several informal discussions with

Muhammadiyah Young Intellectual Network members, in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Malang and Surabaya to gain more information on new developments in Muhammadiyah. During my fieldwork I also observed the Muhammadiyah Ramadan forum in Yogyakarta.

The main finding of this study is that there is an unprecedented conservative trend in Muhammadiyah despite its protestations as to its modernity and notwithstanding the perception of many that it is a modern organization. I argue that the dialectical relation of conservative and progressive Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah has created a vicious circle. That is, while progressivism was formed as a response to the conservative tendency in Muhammadiyah, it has simultaneously aroused a more systematic conservatism in the organization. This research also found an intellectual gap between conservatives and progressives which is evident in how the two groups articulate their arguments. Progressives show a sophisticated line of argument and use reliable sources, while conservatives prefer assertions rather than intellectual exchange. Detail discussion on this finding is in chapter 5.

It is important to also make clear my own involvement with Muhammadiyah. I am not an outsider observer but rather a Muhammadiyah member and activist. I am personally involved in Muhammadiyah Young Intellectual Network (*Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah* or JIMM), one of Muhammadiyah liberal think tanks. This has given me very good access to progressive circles but I am also mindful of the dangers of subjectivity. Despite my activism, I have endeavoured to keep this study academically rigorous and fair.

I have conducted myself as a researcher and sought to approach the opposing view in this work as objectively as possible. This study analyses the genealogy of both groups and describes conflicting ideas between conservatives and progressives. It should be read without regard to my position as a progressive and should be viewed as a scholarly work.

Thesis Structure

This thesis has four remaining chapters and a conclusion. Chapter 2 will explore the dynamics of three Islamic variants of moderate, liberal-progressive and radical-fundamentalist. By drawing the spectrum of Islamic variants in Indonesia, this conflicting view between conservative and progressive become evident. Chapter 3 discusses the genealogy of conservative and progressive groups in Muhammadiyah. The factors that motivated the emergence of both groups will be assessed and analysed. Chapter 4 is about progressive Muhammadiyah activists thought on the issues religious pluralism and the methodology of Islamic thought dissemination in Muhammadiyah. As this thesis is about conflicting ideas between conservatives and progressives, the Chapter 5 is devoted to discussing the conservatives' response to the progressive group. Finally, Chapter 6 will draw the overall discussion together including a brief analysis of the thesis to conclude.

CHAPTER II

THE DISCOURSE OF MODERATE, PROGRESSIVE AND RADICAL ISLAM IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

As has been stated in the previous chapter, Muhammadiyah's internal doctrinal conflict is not unique to Indonesia. To gain a comprehensive picture of the context in which Muhammadiyah's conflicting views occur, a discussion on the discourse of different types of interpretations of Islam is needed. This chapter will discuss moderate, progressive and radical Islamic thought in contemporary Indonesia.

Moderates are located between progressive and conservative thought, but may move towards either extremes depending on circumstances. The discussion of these three categories explores the idea that, in general, while Indonesian Muslims are moderate, conservatism is on the increase, and support for progressive thought is diminishing. By describing these three categories, it is expected that the contestation between conservatives and progressives can be better grasped. Moreover, if Indonesian Islam is confined to only two categories of progressive and conservative, there is a risk of excluding other variants. In this regard, this chapter sets out the variants of Indonesian Islam, namely moderate, liberal-progressive and radical-fundamentalist.

Categorizing Indonesian Islam

The proliferation of various discourses in contemporary Indonesian Islam is often associated with the collapse of the New Order regime. One of the most prominent reforms following Suharto's downfall has been much greater freedom of speech speak and to express differences of opinions and thought. In the field of Islamic thought and movements, this freedom is being manifested in the formation of various Islamic discourses that are disputing several important issues. The groups range from advocates of Islamic law (*shari'a*) formalization to those calling for separation of religion and state, from groups campaigning for democracy and civil society to the groups that pursue violence as a means of conveying Islamic ideals. From a wider perspective, this contestation is one of expressions of dialectical relation between 'authentic' Islam and 'hybrid' Islam which occurs in Indonesia and across the Muslim world.¹

Three major categories of moderate, progressive and conservative exist Islamic thought in Indonesian Islam. This is partly as the result of interaction of Islam with other cultures and the dialectical relationship among various interpretations within Islam, and partly as an outcome of encounters with other value systems. The plethora of categorizations of Indonesian Islam is a clear indication of how complex the Muslim community is. One of the complexities lies in the fact that Indonesian Islam consists of many variants. In addition, it is also often perceived in simplified terms. One over-simplification of Indonesian Islam is the perception that it is fundamentalist in nature which has become popular

¹ Riaz Hassan, "Globalization's Challenge to Islam: How to Create one Islamic Community in A Diverse World," *YaleGlobal*, 17 April 2003.

following the 9/11 tragedy and subsequent terrorist attacks in Indonesia. It is an undeniable fact that the resurgence of radical Islamic groups in the Muslim world has led to reductionist thinking about fundamentalism. To a number of observers of Indonesian Islam, this simplification is common. Secondly, there is also a prevalent belief among certain groups of scholars working on Southeast Asian Islam, that Islam in the region is peripheral. Robert Hefner rightly describes this situation: "Western and Middle Eastern scholars alike have tended to place Southeast Asia at the intellectual periphery of the Muslim world."² Consequently, there is a tendency to disregard the dynamic of Islam in the region. This disregard of Southeast Asian Islam in general and Indonesian Islam in particular, can be accounted for by its ability and flexibility to blend with other elements of local cultures and traditions.

Not surprisingly, there is no single definition on which scholars can agree regarding Indonesian Islam. Certain definitions look at Indonesian Islam in terms of its rich encounter with local cultures and traditions, while others emphasize the fact that Indonesian Islam is fertile ground for the proliferation of many types of Islamic interpretation. Fuad Jabali, as quoted by Michael Laffan, describes Indonesian Islam as: "...about living in a country where women can get on education... where a woman can ride a bicycle in the street without being stared

² Robert Hefner, "Islam in an Era of Nation State: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia", in *Islam in an Era of Nation State: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 8.

at...”³ By and large, Islam in Indonesia has always been identified as moderate, tolerant, open and pluralist.

Categorizing Indonesian Islam is difficult given its diversity. The type of Islam practiced in Aceh and most parts of Sumatera, for instance, will be different to that which is practised in Java. Even with in Java itself, there are sub-variants. In term of jurisprudence, most traditional Indonesian Muslims are the followers of Imam Shafi’i school, while modernist groups are usually closer to Maliki or Hanafi schools. Most Indonesian Muslims are Sunnis, while Shi’ah constitutes a tiny minority group.

Giora Eliraz categorizes Indonesian Islam into two broad categories of modernism and radical Islamic fundamentalism. This categorization tends to ignore other types of Indonesian Islam. Furthermore, opposing modernism and radicalism is like comparing two incomparable things. While modernism is usually opposed to traditionalism, radicalism will be best opposed to liberalism. In the Indonesian context, Islamic radicalism that is represented by Islamist movements such as Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Hizbut Tahrir or Laskar Jihad, are not devoid of Islamic modernism influence. While they promote radical and scriptural ideas of Islam, their birth is partly as a response by Muslim society to modernisation.

To avoid overlooking the variants in Indonesian Islam, my classification of moderate, liberal-progressive and radical-fundamentalist seek to capture Islamic thought. Islamic political issues will be discussed in this study as they are

³ Michael Laffan, “What is Indonesian Islam?” paper presented at discussion at the UCLA symposium ‘Islam and Southeast Asia’, May 15 2006.

regarded as a manifestation of interpretational diversity of Islamic texts and doctrines.

Moderate Islam

Muslim View

In the view of a majority of Muslims, the notion of moderate Islam is often linked to the concept of *umma wasatan* (the moderate community).⁴ This concept is central in basic Islamic understanding of Islamic moderation and serves as common identity for Muslims. For that reason, it is not surprising that there is a common agreement among Muslims that Islam itself is inherently moderate. According to Kuntowijoyo, moderateness can be understood in two senses: that Islam is always between two extreme positions and that Islam combines two opposing conceptual frameworks.⁵ Similarly, Allamah Hussain Tabataba'i asserts that Islam is created by God to be in the middle position, inclined neither to this side nor to that.⁶ In an economic sense, to take a practical example, Islam subscribes to the values of economic practices that are neither capitalist nor socialist.⁷ In politics, Islam is believed as situated between secular and theocratic

⁴ In the Qur'an, *ummah* which literally means community is mentioned often and has various meanings depending on the context. Muslim and Western scholars alike have taken *ummah* as one of important study of the socio-community concept according to Qur'an. Frederick M Denny, for example, has thoroughly studied *ummah* in his sequels: "The Meaning of Ummah in the Qur'an", *History of Religions* Vol. 15, No. 1 (August, 1975), 34-70, and "Some Religio-Communal Terms and Concepts in the Qur'an", *Numen*, Vol. 24, Fasc. 1 (April, 1977), 26-59.

⁵ Kuntowijoyo, *Identitas Politik Umat Islam* (Muslim Political Identity) (Bandung: Mizan, 1997), 4-6.

⁶ Allamah Hussain Thabataba'i, *Tafsir al-Mizan* Vol. 2 (Beirut: Lubnan)

⁷ The notion of Islamic economic system as in between socialist and capitalist can be easily found among Muslims who calling for an Islamic economic system. Whether or not an Islamic economic system offers a middle way between socialism and capitalism, this belief is always presented by

state. Another meaning of *umma wasatan* underlines the importance of balance. Qur'anic formulation of *umma wasatan* suggests two important features: freedom of rights that is balanced with awareness of obligations⁸ and the balance of worldly and hereafter lives.⁹ Based on this reason, moderate Islam is mostly referred to as the ideal form of Islam. Islam itself is not liberal or radical, conservative or progressive. There is only one Islam, the "true Islam".¹⁰

Abid Ullah Jan, an analyst at the Independent Centre for Strategic Studies and Analysis, Canada, calls the nature of Muslim moderateness "moderate by default."¹¹ Moderate Muslims by default, states Jan, are identified by three actions that concentrate on the relationship to God. A moderate Muslim by default has to possess an ultimate devotion, namely a devotion to her/his life to the God as the Creator of the universe; this sense of devotion should not be limited to the personal level but has to be extended to others. Therefore, a moderate Muslim by default should also "invite others to develop such a relationship with God," and lastly stand up against all things that can potentially ruin this relationship.¹² The doctrine of moderateness of Islam is also evident from two main Islamic sources of law, the Qur'an and Hadith. Both the Qur'an and Hadith mention the importance of being moderate several times.¹³

the supporter of Islamic economic system. See, for example, Muhammad Nejatullah Siddiqi, *Some Aspects of the Islamic Economy* (n.p: Islamic Publication, 1972).

⁸ Q.S. 2: 269

⁹ Tarmizi Taher, "Ummatan Wasathan", (The Moderate Community), *Republika*, 19 August 2005.

¹⁰ Muqtedar Khan, "Radical Islam, Liberal Islam", *Current History* December 2003.

¹¹ Abid Ullah Jan, "Muslims have to be moderate by default", *The Nation*, 8 May 2004.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ See Qur'an 2: 143. Also see *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 3, book 40, hadith no. 550; vol. 4, book 55, hadith no 629; vol. 7, book 70, hadith no. 557; and vol. 8, book 76, hadith no. 470, 471, 474; and *Sahih Muslim*, book 32, hadith no. 6243.

The emergence of moderate in Islamic thought can be traced to earlier periods of Islamic theology. If moderate means middle way or a position between two opposing positions, the emergence of the Mu'tazilah school in Islamic theology can be seen as the beginning of Islamic moderateness.¹⁴ Soon after the assassination of the third caliph Uthman bin Affan, Muslims groups, mainly political, were involved in a debate over the status of Uthman's murderer. A group called Khawarij stated that the murderer of Uthman was a *kafir* since he has committed one of the biggest sins in Islam. Another theological school of Murji'ah believed that murderer was a *kafir* but his punishment should be suspended until the Day of Judgement. Mu'tazilah which was founded by Atha' bin Washil, proclaimed a position that was neither Khawarij nor Murji'ah. People who have committed major sins, Washil argued, were neither *kafir* nor Muslim, but he is a big sinner. This doctrine is known as *al-manzilah baina al-manzilatain* (a position between two positions) which constitutes the first teaching of Washil bin Atha' of Mu'tazilah.¹⁵

However, this understanding of Islamic moderateness seems inflexible. More than just a position between two extreme positions, the current context of Islamic moderateness requires a more sophisticated academic explanation. That is, it is an unintended consequence of the encounter between Islam with various

¹⁴ Although in the latter development Mu'tazilah grew as rational school of theology in Islam, the first doctrine of the school that clearly opposed one extreme position (the murderer of Uthman has been turn into *kafir* and should be punished) and other extreme position (the murderer of Uthman, indeed has gone *kafir* as the result of committing major sin, but the punishment will be suspended until in the hereafter and only God has right to do that) indicate the moderateness that early Mu'tazilah embraced.

¹⁵ Harun Nasution, *Islam Rasional: Gagasan dan Pemikiran* (Rational Islam: Ideas and Thought) (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), 127-128. For more detail discussion about theological school in Islam, see Harun Nasution, *Teologi Islam* (Islamic Theology) (Jakarta: UI Press, 1970).

world systems, the most prominent being globalization. It is believed that globalization “has allowed divisive militancy to arise and flourish.”¹⁶ In the circles of radical and fundamentalist Muslims, moderate Islam is often understood as America’s attempt to secure its political agendas and economic interests from the radical Islam threat; it can also mean that moderate Muslims are those who have been sold out.¹⁷ Consequently, those who are known as moderate Muslims are believed as trapped into the patron-client relationship with America. Similarly, Yamin Zakaria equates moderate Islam with secularised Islam that he sees as an American scheme. Zakaria critically asserts: “The US government has initiated a drive to manufacture ‘scholars’ and ‘experts’ to promote a ‘moderate’ version of Islam, simultaneously recruiting and promoting those existing ‘moderates’ (neo-mods) that are wittingly or unwittingly campaigning for the same.”¹⁸

Muslim resistance to the moderate Islam as it is generally understood in the West can also be seen from Ali Mazru’i’s argument on the distinction of political radicalization and theological conservatism.¹⁹ Political radicalization is a context in which Muslims become politically radical to external factors and which do not necessarily reflect their own theological position. In fact, Mazru’i argues, the two have different roots. While American sense of moderation equates to political radicalization and theological conservatism as threat that can be dealt with by a ‘moderate Islam’. However, being theologically conservative does not

¹⁶ Riaz Hassan, “Globalization’s Challenge to Islam: How to Create one Islamic Community in A Diverse World,” *YaleGlobal*, 17 April 2003.

¹⁷ See Muqtadar Khan’s article, “Islamic Democracy and Moderate Muslims: The Straight Path Runs through the Middle”, *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (22: 3),

¹⁸ Yamin Zakaria, “Who Are the Muslim Moderates (Neo-Mods)”, <http://icssa.org>

¹⁹ Ali Mazru’i, “Liberal Islam versus Moderate Islam: Elusive Moderate and the Siege of Mentality”, *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (22: 3), 84-94.

always mean politically radical. The Royal House of Saudi Arabia is an example where theological conservatism does not necessarily mean political radicalization. Saudi Arabia has been prominent and faithful ally to America,²⁰ but in terms of theological doctrine, Saudi Arabia is very conservative and is the site of one of the most important fundamentalist groups in contemporary Islam, Wahhabism.²¹ The notion of moderate Islam depends on perception whether political as used by the Bush administration or as an ethical value that is applied by Muslims.

Moderate Islam, to Mazru'i, can be understood in two terms. The first is related to the American point of view which requires political moderation as its core element. The second relates to attempts to interpret Islamic doctrines in order to respond to contemporary challenges, and it is this kind of moderateness that is akin to doctrinal liberalization.²² Mazru'i's identification of moderate Islam with doctrinal liberalization implies moderate Islam is similar to liberal Islam. Again, moderateness as an ethical system that is embodied in Muslim personalities which echoes Muqtedar Khan's identification. To Khan Moderate Muslims are Muslims who are reflective, self-critical, pro-democracy and pro-human rights and closet secularist. They differ from militant Muslims. The difference is in their methodological orientation and in the primordial normative preferences that shape their interpretation of Islam. For moderate Muslims, *ijtihad* is the preferred method of choice for socio-political changes and military jihad is the last option.

²⁰ For a comprehensive discussion on the relationship of America and Saudi Arabia, see Craig Unger, *House of Bush House of Saud: The Secret Relationship of Two Most Powerful Dynasties* (New York: Scribner, 2004).

²¹ See Natana J De-Long Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

²² Ali Mazru'i, "Liberal Islam versus Moderate Islam: Elusive Moderate and the Siege of Mentality", *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (22: 3), 84-94.

While “for militant Muslims, military jihad is the first option and *ijtihad* is not an option at all.”²³ Louay Safi identifies a moderate Muslim as a person who is not comfortable with his/her Islamic roots and heritage, is openly hostile to Islam, and is eager to transcend all Islamic norms.²⁴

Khaled Abou el Fadl sees moderate in a distinctive way. For him, none of the labels that refer to Islamic modernism “work as well as moderate”.²⁵ He states:

Aside from the issue of liberalism and its relation to reform and progress, there are other reasons that dissuade me from using the term *reformers* and *progressives*. It might be that a minority of Muslims are reformers or progressives, but in term of Islamic theology and law, the *majority* of Muslims are moderates. Progressiveness and reformism are position often adopted by an intellectual elite but moderation more aptly describe the religious conviction of the majority of Muslims.²⁶

Fadl’s assertion is contradictory. While he argues that moderate is a position adopted by the majority of Muslims and is reluctant to use terms such as liberal and progressive; he asserts that progressiveness and reformism are adapted by the intellectual elite. This means that when he uses “moderate” instead of “liberal” or “progressive”, he actually is mixing the popular Muslim consciousness of Islam and the intellectual elite, and ignores the existence of liberal and progressive Muslims who cannot moderates. Certainly, moderates and liberals have different positions regarding many issues such as how

²³ Muqtedar Khan, “Islamic Democracy and Moderate Muslims: The Straight Path Runs through the Middle”, *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (22: 3),

²⁴ Louay Safi, “Reflection on Ijtihad and Moderate Islam”, *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (22: 3), 90-94.

²⁵ Khaled Abou el Fadl, *Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005), 16.

²⁶ Abou Fadhl, p. 18.

religious texts should be interpreted, the use of Islamic symbolism and the relation of Islam with local culture.

Westerners' Views

Muslim scholars consider the moderate Islam concept as highly contentious and the same can be said of western intellectuals. The contestation over moderate Islam can be seen from Robert Spencer's assertion that understanding a "moderate Muslim" will depend on how people define it. Spencer asks:

Is it one who will never engage in terrorist attacks? That would make moderate an overwhelming majority of Muslims worldwide. Is moderate one who sincerely disapproves those terrorist acts? That would reduce the number of moderate. Or is moderate Muslim one who actively speaks out and works against the Jihadists? That will lower the number yet again. Or, finally, is moderate Muslim one who actively engages the Jihadist in theological battle, trying to convince Muslims that jihad terrorism is wrong on Islamic ground? That would leave us with a tiny handful.²⁷

Spencer's acknowledgement is an example of how moderate Islam is widely defined. At one level, moderate Islam is seen as political scheme that serves as an antidote to Islamic radicalism. Ariel Cohen, for instance, defines moderate Muslims as Muslims who do not view the "greater jihad"²⁸ either as a pillar of faith or as a predominant dimension thereof.²⁹ John L Esposito argues that moderate Islam is usually defined as someone like "us".³⁰ In describing what

²⁷ Robert Spencer, *Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam* (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, inc, 2005), 198.

²⁸ Ariel Cohen, "Power or Ideology: What the Islamists Choose Will Determine Their Future", *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (22: 3), p. 1-10.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ John L Esposito, "Moderate Muslims: A Mainstream of Modernist, Islamist, Conservatives and Traditionalist," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (22: 3), p. 11-20.

moderate Islam is, Graham Fuller proposes a distinction of moderate Muslim definitions from American and the Middle East perspectives.³¹ According to Fuller, moderateness of Islam for non-Muslims would be identified as to whether people believe in democracy, tolerance, a non-violent approach to politics and equal treatment for men and women at legal and social level. According to Fuller, the American government has functionally added several more requirements: "A moderate Muslim is one who does not oppose the country's strategic and geopolitical ambitions in the world, who accepts American interests and preferences within the world order, who believes that Islam has no role in politics, and who avoids any confrontation with Israel".³²

This definition supports what John Esposito calls moderateness is likeliness. America sees moderate Muslims as those who favour its interests and agendas and in doing so, America has undermined Muslims' belief on their religious doctrine. However, while Muslims believe that adopt moderate position is ideal for them, that position does not necessarily mean silent agreement to America's treatment of the Muslim world.³³

For Fuller, moderate Islam is an ethical value that is embodied in Muslim personalities. To be moderate requires awareness of the changeability of Islamic history and practices and whether Islamic teachings should be preserved precisely as at the Prophet's time or interpreted according to the contemporary context, and

³¹ Graham E. Fuller, "Freedom and Security: Necessary Condition for Moderation" in *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (22: 3), 21-28.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ For a detail account on the hatred of radical Muslims to American foreign policy, see Merlyna Lim, "Islamic Radicalism and Anti-Americanism in Indonesia: The Role of the Internet," *Policy Studies* 18 (Washington: East West Center, 2005).

this constitutes one of major problems in Islam. Fuller also states that being moderate also necessitates an acceptance of the validity of other faiths, something that radical Islam will not do.

Although Fuller acknowledges the definition of moderate Islam from the American perspective is contentious, he develops his own understanding that puts moderateness in a more sophisticated way. He wrote:

...moderate Muslim is one who is open to the idea of evolutionary change through history in the understanding and practice of Islam, one who shuns literalism and selectivism in the understanding of sacred text. A moderate would reject the idea that any one group or individual has a monopoly in defining Islam and would seek to emphasize common ground with other faith, rather accentuate the differences. A moderate would try to seek within Islam the roots of political and social values that are broadly consonant with most of the general values of the rest of the contemporary world. A moderate Muslim would not reject the validity of other faiths.³⁴

In his article "Why Soft Power Matters in Fighting Terrorism" Joseph S Nye supports the bolstering of moderate Muslims and attracts them with what he calls America's soft power. According to Nye, moderate Muslims are instrumental in fighting terrorism. Nye deliberately acknowledges that the war on terrorism is not a clash of civilizations between Islam versus the West. "It is a civil war within Islamic civilization between extremists and moderates." The former legitimises the use of violence to enforce their views on certain issues, which are mainly religious, while the latter seek to live productive lives pursuing jobs, education, and social interaction as they practice their faith. America will not win, Nye proclaims, unless the moderate Muslims win. American soft power will

³⁴ Graham Fuller, "Freedom and Security: Necessary Condition for Moderation" in *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (22: 3), 21-28.

only attract moderates and not extremist. Soft power will play a crucial role in America's ability to attract the moderates and deny the extremists new recruits.³⁵

Indonesian moderateness corresponds to the formulations discussed above --that moderation is a position between two extremes-- although it has been enriched by local issues and problems. A recent poll conducted by *Lingkaran Survei Indonesia* (LSI or Indonesian Survey Circle) in August 2006 suggests Indonesian Islam's sense of moderateness is unique.³⁶ The poll was conducted as to public response to shari'a formalization and revealed that the majority of respondents favoured Indonesia run a national law that guarantees diversity and not Islamic law.³⁷ Even among Muslim respondents (61,7%) the response was similar. Interestingly, that report also revealed that the majority of respondents also agreed with the existence of anti-immorality acts (80%). However, 53% of respondents believe that such bylaws have been comprehensively represented by KUHP, and for that reason, new laws on specific kinds of immoral acts is not needed. Indonesian society in general prefers Pancasila state as their system and very few choose western-style democratic government or Middle-Eastern style governments.

Liberal-Progressive Islam

On 2 January 1972, Nurcholish Madjid delivered his lecture on the urgency of interpreting Islam in accordance with Indonesian values, calling for

³⁵ Joseph S. Nye Jr, "Why Soft Power Matters in Fighting Terrorism", *Washington Post*, March 30, 2004, p. A19.

³⁶ *Lingkaran Survei Indonesia, Respon Publik Atas Peraturan Daerah (Perda) Bernuansa Syari'at*, <http://www.lsi.co.id/artikel.php?id=446>, accessed on 21 December 2006.

³⁷ 64,3% of 700 respondents that was chosen through a multi-stage random sampling.

pembaruan Islam (Islamic reformation) and *sekularisasi Islam* (the secularization of Islam).³⁸ Secularization, Nurcholish argued, is an unavoidable consequence of modernity. By this, Nurcholish meant secularizing things that are supposed to be secular in Islam such as politics and the economy. Since then, the seeds of Islamic liberalism have been planted, although the term liberal Islam was not explicitly used. Nurcholish's call for Islamic reformation and secularization aroused heated debate and was challenged by Muslim intellectuals at that time. The most prominent critic was H. M. Rasjidi who viewed Nurcholish's idea of secularization as contrary to Islamic teachings. In addition to Nurcholish, liberal Islam ideas in Indonesia are also often associated with intellectuals such as Abdurrahman Wahid, Djohan Effendy and Ahmad Wahib. In his study on liberal ideas in Indonesian Islam, Greg Barton classifies these names as the pioneers of liberal Islam in Indonesia.³⁹ This can be seen as the first wave of liberal Islam in Indonesia.

In addition to the ideas that Nurcholish espoused, the debate on liberal Islam in Indonesia was also broadened through the translation of two important academic works on liberal Islam: Charles Kurzman's *Liberal Islam: A Source Book* and Leonard Binder's *Islamic Liberalism: Critique to Development Ideologies*. Although of these books were produced more recently, they still play an important role in introducing Islamic liberalism ideas, especially for young Muslims who did not witness the debate when it was firstly launched by Nurcholish Madjid. In his study, Kurzman classifies Islam into three traditions of

³⁸ See Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Kemodernan dan Keindonesiaan* (Islam, Modernity and Indonesian-ity?) (Bandung: Mizan, 1987).

³⁹ Greg Barton, *Gagasan Islam Liberal di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999).

customary Islam. The first is an Islam that is characterized by a combination of Islamic practices and local traditions; the second tradition is revivalist Islam or fundamentalist Islam; and the third is liberal Islam. According to Kurzman, either revivalist Islam or liberal Islam are in opposition customary Islam.⁴⁰

To implement his ideas on Islamic reformism and spread liberal Islam thinking, Nurcholish set up the *Yayasan Wakaf Paramadina* (Paramadina Endowment Foundation) in 1986. The institute was founded as a centre for activities that promoted creative and constructive religiosity and sought to avoid defensive and reactive attitudes in religion.⁴¹ Paramadina has been involved in spreading liberal Islam ideas through education and various publications. Paramadina is also well-known as promoting religious pluralism and inclusive Islam. In terms of religious pluralism, Paramadina publishes books such as *Fiqih Lintas Agama* (Interfaith Fikih)⁴² caused controversy among Indonesian Muslims.⁴³

The second wave of Islamic liberalism occurred in the late New Order and post-Suharto period through the emergence of a number of intellectual communities –mainly from an NU background-- that offered alternative views in understanding Islamic doctrines and teachings as well as how Islam should be interpreted in changing social and political conditions. Among those communities

⁴⁰ Charles Kurzman, *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁴¹ http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yayasan_Paramadina. Accessed on 21 May 2007.

⁴² See Mun'im A Sirry (ed), *Fiqih Lintas Agama: Membangun Masyarakat Inklusif Pluralis* (Jakarta: Paramadina and The Asia Foundation, 2004).

⁴³ This book has aroused backlash from conservative Muslim groups in Indonesia. Among the responses are: Hartono Ahmad Jaiz and Agus Hasan Bashori, *Mengangkal Bahaya JIL and FLA (Fikih Lintas Agama)* (Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 2003). Tim Editor Mujahidin, *Kekafiran Berfikir Sekte Paramadina: Dari Debat Publik Fiqih Lintas Agama Majelis Mujahidin versus Tim Penulis Paramadina* (Jogjakarta: Wihdah Press, 2004).

are: The Institute of Islamic and Social Studies (*Lembaga Kajian Islam dan Sosial*, LKIS) in Yogyakarta; The Institute for the Study of Religion and Democracy (*Lembaga Kajian Agama dan Demokrasi* or eLSAD) in Surabaya. Later, similar groups also emerged in Jakarta such as *Jaringan Islam Liberal* (Liberal Islam Network or JIL), P3M, Lakpesdam and The Wahid Institute. Although, those groups promote similar issues and aim to achieve similar goals, JIL's influence on the general public is much greater than the other liberal counterparts and there is a tendency to equate liberal Islamic thought in contemporary Indonesia with the formation of this group.

LKIS was founded as an attempt to resolve the problem of relation between Islam and the state in the 1980s.⁴⁴ LKIS actively publishes and translates books on progressive and critical Islamic thought. Among the first books that LKIS published were: *Kiri Islam* (Islamic Left) a translation of Kazuo Shimogaki's book and *Dekonstruksi Syari'ah* (Shari'a Deconstruction), translated from Abdullahi Ahmed an-Naim's book. The importance of those publications is that they play a key role in the rise and spread of critical, liberal and progressive ideas of Islam in NU's younger generation as well in Indonesia more generally. Similarly, *Jaringan Islam Liberal* was formed, as Luthfi Assyaukanie, one of JIL's founding members, acknowledges, as a reflection of young Muslims' anxiety toward the proliferation of radical interpretations of Islam⁴⁵ as well as the rise of Islamic fundamentalist groups that threaten peaceful, open and tolerant life

⁴⁴ See LKIS's website: <http://www.lkis.or.id>

⁴⁵ "Kampanye Baru Mengangkat Tabu," (New Campaign Revealing Taboo) *Gatra*, 8 December 2001.

styles.⁴⁶ JIL also seeks to argue against Muslim perceptions of Islamic teachings that tend to be literal. It argues Islam is not static and is like a living organism,⁴⁷ and because of this, Islam is open to new interpretations in accordance with time and space changes. Furthermore, JIL's formation was not only motivated by religion but also by political and social circumstances of Indonesian society. In political terms, this network attempts to be critical of the dualism of Muslim's attitude toward the relation of state and religion.⁴⁸ JIL's activities were funded through an Asia Foundation grant.⁴⁹

The term liberal itself is highly contentious and when associated with 'Islam,' it is reasonable that it will trigger controversy. The Indonesian public reacted in different ways to JIL's activities. To certain groups of Indonesian Muslims, 'liberal' is often identified with the West and viewed as criticism of religions based on the view that faith is a barrier for human reasoning in understanding the law of universe.⁵⁰ Hartono Ahmad Jaiz equates the term liberal with secular and plural notions and accordingly JIL's objective is to spread

⁴⁶ Muhammad Ali, "The Rise of Liberal Islam Network (JIL) in Contemporary Indonesia", *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* Vol. 22, No. 1, Winter 2005.

⁴⁷ Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, "Menyegarkan Kembali Pemikiran Islam" (Refresh Islamic Thought), *Kompas*, 18 November 2002. This article has created a heated in Indonesia. This debate culminated in the issuance of fatawa of capital punishment for Ulil Abshar-Abdalla. The fatawa was issued by K.H. Atian Ali, a cleric from Bandung that felt offended by Ulil's article.

⁴⁸ Luthfi Assyaukanie, "Islam Liberal: Pandangan Partisipan (Liberal Islam: A Participant's View)" in *Wajah Liberal Islam Indonesia* (Jakarta: Teater Utan Kayu and Jaringan Islam Liberal, 2002), xxv.

⁴⁹ "Kampanye Baru Mengangkat Tabu" (New Campaign Lifting Taboo), *Gatra*, 8 December 2001, p. 64-8.

⁵⁰ Muhammad Nasih, "Memahami Konsep Islam Liberal" (Understanding the Concept of Liberal Islam), *Suara Merdeka*, 30 September 2002.

secularism and religious pluralism that can lead to apostasy.⁵¹ Liberal Islam is also seen as being influenced by orientalist and Christian thought.⁵²

In contrast, according to Syamsu Rizal Panggabean, liberal Islam should be understood in terms of several features: critical, energetic and creative. Without these qualities, liberal Islam will be sterile, faded and useless.⁵³ The term liberal, according to Luthfi Assyauckanie, means liberation from a religious way of thinking and behaviour that prevents progress. Liberal Islam cannot be opposed to traditionalism, revivalism, or modernism. It cannot also be contrasted to new models such as neo-modernism and postmodernism since liberal Islamic ideas are a combination of elements of modern thinking.⁵⁴ However, when assessing the issues of this group, it can be seen as a continuation of the neo-modernist agenda.⁵⁵ Issues such as relation of state and religion, pluralism, democracy and gender equality are similar to those which neo-modernist Muslims have been discussing several decades before.

Most of the activists and intellectuals in Paramadina, LKIS, eLSAD, JIL and The Wahid Institute are from an NU background, few from Muhammadiyah.

⁵¹ Hartono Ahmad Jaiz, "Islam Liberal, Permurtadan Berlabel Islam," www.alDakwah.com. Hartono Ahmad Jaiz is popular with his books and writings that reject all alternative views and interpretations of Islam. He has written numerous books that can be classified as provocative. Among his books are: *Ada Pemurtadan di IAIN* (Apostasy in IAIN), *Bahaya Islam Liberal* (The Danger of Liberal Islam).

⁵² This can be seen from Adnin Armas's book, *Pengaruh Kristen Orientalis terhadap Islam Liberal: Dialog Interaktif dengan Aktivis Jaringan Islam Liberal* (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2003).

⁵³ Syamsu Rizal Panggabean, "Prospek Islam Liberal di Indonesia" (The Prospect of Liberal Islam in Indonesia), in Luthfi Assyauckani (ed) *Wajah Liberal Islam Indonesia* (Liberal Face of Indonesian Islam) (Jakarta: Teater Utan Kayu and JIL, 2002).

⁵⁴ "Islam Liberal versus Islam Literal," (Liberal Islam versus Literal Islam) *Tempo Magazine*, No. 38/XXX/19-25 November 2001.

⁵⁵ Nicolaus Teguh Budi Harjanto, *Islam and Liberalism in Contemporary Indonesia: The Political Ideas of Jaringan Islam Liberal* (Liberal Islam Network), M.A. Thesis, Ohio State University, August 2003.

With the exception of Paramadina, the idea of liberal Islam flourishes in NU tradition not so in Muhammadiyah. This is interesting as NU tradition requires the mastery of classical Islamic discourse as part of basic education for NU young generation. These NU activists then move in different social settings and challenge their traditions and 'dogmatic' understanding of Islam. The formation of many liberal communities within NU can also be seen as the culmination of, among other things, the liberal tradition within NU youth which was partly set in place by Abdurrahman Wahid during his leadership in NU (1984-1999).

Shortly after JIL's emergence, a group of young intellectuals named themselves *Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Young Intellectuals Network, JIMM) emerged in Muhammadiyah. There is much speculation regarding the inception of JIMM, particularly that it was driven by jealousy of NU's liberal activities. Many JIMM activists reject this view by asserting that it is an internal dynamic in Muhammadiyah that is the main driving force. In my view, there are two main factors that led to JIMM's emergence: intellectual stagnation and doctrinal conservatism within Muhammadiyah. Moeslim Abdurrahman, JIMM's mentor, outlines the importance of planting intellectual discourse in Muhammadiyah. According to Moeslim, the intellectual movement in Muhammadiyah has been stagnant. The root cause of this situation is that for a very long period, Muhammadiyah believed that the Islam practised in Muhammadiyah was more pure and therefore more valid.⁵⁶ JIMM was founded in the midst of this environment and particularly in the growing conservatism in

⁵⁶ "Dr. Moeslim Abdurrahman: Tiga Pilar JIMM" (Dr. Moeslim Abdurrahman: Three Pillars of JIMM), *Republika*, 21 November 2003.

Muhammadiyah. Like other liberal groups, JIMM also promotes contemporary understanding of Islamic teaching and challenges the conservative interpretation of Islam within Muhammadiyah.⁵⁷

Liberal Islamic ideas in contemporary Indonesia are well-developed and widespread among young Muslims. However, many pessimistic views are addressed on the future of this movement. Faisal Devji asserts that Islamic liberalism today is at its lowest ebb since the nineteenth century. This is not because Muslims are more militant than before, but because the moderation marketed to governments by Muslim notables is itself redundant.⁵⁸ In a narrower context, Syamsu Rizal Panggabean advises that in order to be compatible with contemporary Indonesian Islam needs, liberal Islam should have an interpretation method, to recognise irrelevant issues from those which should have prominence on liberal Islam's agenda, and to focus on the Indonesian problem rather than on a global issue.⁵⁹ Devji's analysis is true when we look at the fact that liberal Islam in Indonesia concerns with abstract ideas that do not directly involve with society's real problems. This contrary advice should be taken into serious account by liberal Islam movements in Indonesia, to avoid repeating the same mistakes made by the previous generation of Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia.

⁵⁷ This topic will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 and 4.

⁵⁸ Faisal Devji, "Why Liberal Islam is Not the Solution", *Financial Times*, November 9, 2005.

⁵⁹ Syamsu Rizal Panggabean, "Prospek Islam Liberal di Indonesia" (Prospect of Liberal Islam in Indonesia) in Luthfi Assyaukani (ed), *Wajah Liberal Islam Indonesia* (Liberal Face of Indonesian Islam), (Jakarta: Teater Utan Kayu and Jaringan Islam Liberal, 2002), 9-16.

Radical Fundamentalist Islam

Before moving onto further discussion on radical-fundamentalist Islam in Indonesia, it is important to define fundamentalism in the context of this study.⁶⁰ According to Martyn E Marty, religious fundamentalism can be identified from four features: First, fundamentalism is oppositionalism. Islamic fundamentalism is in opposition to challenges that are seen as threatening the existence of religion including modernity, secularization, liberalization and western values in general. The second is the rejection of hermeneutics. Muslim fundamentalists reject critical attitudes towards religious texts. Qur'anic text should be understood in its literal meaning, as they believe that human's reasoning cannot achieve appropriate interpretation on religious the text.

Thirdly, fundamentalists reject religious pluralism. Fundamentalists regard religious pluralism is the result of invalid interpretation of the Qur'an. Religious pluralism is also seen as leading Muslims to religious relativism that could erode one's faith. Lastly, fundamentalists reject historical and sociological progress. They believe that historical and sociological progress of the society has prevented human beings from literal doctrines and understanding of the scripture.⁶¹ In this study, I will use Marty's definition of fundamentalism as a model, as this definition can be applied in an Indonesian context.

⁶⁰ The resurgent of Islam in the Muslim world during the last century has attracted many academic debates. The debates also concerning about what these movements should be labelled. Fundamentalist, radical, Islamist, salafi, Wahhabi, are among the labels that are employed to name these movements. Despite the debate on the use of these terms in academic discourses, in this context these terms will be interchangeably used.

⁶¹ Martyn E Marty, "What is Fundamentalism? Theological Perspective", in Hans Küng and Jurgen Moltmann (eds), *Fundamentalism as an Ecumenical Challenge* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 3-31.

The collapse of Suharto's authoritarian regime is often regarded as the point where radical Islamic groups in contemporary Indonesia come to the fore. Five groups are particularly important, they are *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI, Indonesian Islamic Warrior's Council), *Front Pembela Islam* (FPI, Islamic Defender Front), *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI), Laskar Jihad (Jihad Force) and *Jamaah Islamiyah* (JI). The emergence birth of these groups marked a new phase of Islamic radicalism resurgence in Indonesia.

However, the existence of radical Islam movements in Indonesia is not a new phenomenon. Radical Islam has a long and complex history that can be traced back to at least the last two centuries.⁶² In the late eighteenth century and the beginning of nineteenth century, in West Sumatra a radical Islamic group emerged. A group named Kaum Padri was a Wahhabi-like movement that advocated the adoption of pristine and scriptural understanding of Islam.⁶³ During the struggle for independence, there also existed an Islamic radical group that can be regarded as the indigenous radical Islamic movement at the time: Darul Islam. Given the importance of Darul Islam in planting the seed of Islamic radicalism, Martin van Bruinessen argues that the contemporary radical Islamic groups in Indonesia can be likened to this.⁶⁴ In addition, Indonesian historians such as Sartono Kartodirjo and Kuntowijoyo classify Sarekat Islam as a radical Islam

⁶² Azyumardi Azra, "Islam in Southeast Asia: Tolerant and Radicalism", paper presented at Miegunyah Public Lecture, The University of Melbourne, 6 April 2005.

⁶³ Further discussion on Padri movement can be found in Christine Dobbin, *Islamic Revivalism in A Changing Peasant Economy* (London: Curzon Press, 1983).

⁶⁴ Martin van Bruinessen, "Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia", *South East Asia Research* (10: 2), 117-154.

movement in the early twentieth century as the Sarekat Islam utilised the amalgamation of Islamic revivalism ideology.⁶⁵

While it is true that current radical groups have a connection to previous radical groups, the current circumstances of radical Islam in Indonesia is much more complex due to the diversity of radical groups in contemporary Indonesia and those of international issues. In addition, a further complexity is the dramatic political changes globally and locally following September 11 tragedy and Bali bombings which has led to the fast growing perception of a raise in radical Islamic groups in Indonesia. It is this perception that has led some foreign observers to label Indonesia and any other countries in Southeast Asia as hotbed for Islamic terrorism and radicalism. Further, there is also a belief that Indonesia's radical groups are branches of international terrorist networks. Laskar Jihad and Jama'ah Islamiyah are among groups that are often referred as being part of the al-Qaeda network.⁶⁶ Many believe such a portrayal is an exaggeration and obviously misleading.⁶⁷

Because of such a depiction, there is tendency to overlook indigenous factors in the emergence of radical Islam in Indonesia. In the Indonesian context, the rise of radical fundamentalist Islamic groups is triggered by both local and global causes. On a global level, Indonesian Islamic radicalism can be linked to the common response of the Muslim world to the treatment of the Muslim world

⁶⁵ Azyumardi Azra, "Muslimin Indonesia: Viabilitas Garis Keras" (Indonesian Muslims: Hard Line Viability) in *Gatra* special edition 2000, p. 44.

⁶⁶ Such a belief can be found, for instance, in Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

⁶⁷ Muhammad Sirozi, "The Intellectual Roots of Radical Islam in Indonesia", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 95, January 2005, 81-120.

by the West, and in response to secularized globalization and any other systems that are seen as un-Islamic. In Ali Mazru'i's view there are three main reasons for the rise of radical Islam. The first is what he calls "Latin Americanization" of the Middle East by American policy-makers and strategists; the second is related to the state of Israel, its brutal occupation of the Palestinian people, the annexation of Jerusalem, and the United States' enormous material, diplomatic, and support of the Jewish state; and lastly, the humiliation of Muslims in many countries.⁶⁸ It is inevitable that many see Islamic fundamentalism as a response to Western domination in almost all fields of life. Abdullah Ahmed an-Na'im warns that Islamic fundamentalism should not be dismissed as insignificant in the face of ultimate victory of Western liberalism nor exaggerated into a manifestation of permanent opposition of the so-called Western and non-Western civilization.⁶⁹ This confirms that fundamentalism is a product of wide-ranging factors and causes. To date, these causes are even exacerbated by the arrests of suspected terrorism perpetrators in several Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia.

More specifically, it is difficult to separate radical Islamic groups in Indonesia from those of Middle Eastern origins. In Anthony Bubalo and Greg Fealy's study, there is a close connection between Islamic radicalism in Indonesia with that of the Middle East. In this respect, Bubalo and Fealy argue, that on this discussion, two things should be taken into consideration. Firstly, that the

⁶⁸ Ali Mazru'i, "Liberal Islam versus Moderate Islam: Elusive Moderate and the Siege of Mentality", *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (22: 3), 84-94.

⁶⁹ Abdullahi Ahmed an-Naim, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Social Change: Neither 'The End of History' nor 'Clash of Civilizations'", in Gerrie ter Harr and James J. Busuttil, *The Freedom To Do God's Will: Religious Fundamentalism and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 2003).

transmission took one way method, namely from the Middle East to Indonesia and not the other way around. Secondly, the transmission also has what Bubalo and Fealy called pull and push factors.⁷⁰

In a similar tone, Azyumardi Azra argues that radical Islamic groups that are seen in Indonesia and Southeast Asia today is result of the transmission of Middle Eastern Islamic orthodoxy that was brought back to Indonesia and Malay by students or teachers. Returning students and scholars, argues Azra, established a more *shari'a*-oriented Islam in the Malay-Indonesia world, and by doing this, the so-called “pantheistic” Sufism found its fertile ground. It is this event that marked the initial rise of scriptural Islam in contemporary Southeast Asia.⁷¹

The influence of Middle Eastern ideas of radical Islam in Indonesia is also evident when groups such as Tarbiyah and Hizbut Tahrir are analysed.⁷² The ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimin*) is an important ingredient in shaping current Islamic radicalism in Indonesia, especially the Tarbiyah movement. Hassan al-Banna’s and Taqiyyuddin an-Nabhani’s thought is

⁷⁰ Anthony Bubalo and Greg Fealy, *Joining the Caravans?: The Middle East, Islamism and Indonesia* (Alexandria: Lowy Institute, 2005).

⁷¹ Azyumardi Azra, see also Azyumardi Azra, *The Origin of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia* (Crownest, Aust: AAAS & Allen and Unwin, 2004).

⁷² See Greg Fealy, “Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia: The Faltering Revival?”, *Southeast Asian Affairs 2004*, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2004). See also Imaduddin Rahmat, *Arus Baru Islam Radikal di Indonesia* (The New Wave of Radical Islam in Indonesia) (Jakarta: Pustaka Erlangga, 2005).

influential in students circles in several prominent universities in Indonesia.⁷³

These circles later developed into groups such as KAMMI and Hizbut Tahrir.⁷⁴

On a national level, the rise of radical Islamic groups can be seen as a response to the domestic political realities. As Azyumardi Azra argues the breakdown of law and the relative weakness of government authority can be seen as one of the triggering factors.⁷⁵ Muhammad Sirozi shares such a view by asserting that there are many local factors that propelled Islamic radicalism into existence, such as Indonesia's economic crisis, the ensuing collapse of old social and political order and the breakdown of political leadership.⁷⁶ In short, the origin of radicalism is complex and can not be confined to a single factor. Similarly, Rizvi stands on the position of the complexity of Islamic radicalism root cause. He asserts, as quoted by Sirozi, that radicalism is not "triggered by territorial interests but by ill-defined religious ideals, zeal and fanaticism, born out of despair and humiliation that many communities feel about the impact of global inequalities on their lives, and their lack of access to democratic institutions."⁷⁷

Apart from political and social factors, the rise of Islamic radicalism in Indonesia can be associated to the rise of liberal-minded thought. The proliferation of liberal Islamic thought in contemporary Indonesia has invited

⁷³ The birth of KAMMI can not be separated from Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (Campus Propagation Institutions) that were gathered at Muhammadiyah University of Malang in 1998. It should be noted that the meeting was initially meant to be a national congress of Lembaga Dakwah Kampus. However, since the LDKs were dominated by Tarbiyah affiliated activists, the meeting was eventually resulted in the birth of KAMMI that can be obviously seen as an important underbow for the PK(S).

⁷⁴ For more detail study see Imaduddin Rahman, *Arus Baru Islam Radikal di Indonesia* (The New Wave of Radical Islam in Indonesia) (Jakarta: Pustaka Erlangga, 2005).

⁷⁵ Azra, "Islam in Southeast Asia:

⁷⁶ Muhammad Sirozi, "The Intellectual Roots of Radical Islam in Indonesia", *The Muslim World*, Vol. 95, January 2005, 81-120.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

response from radical groups. It is clear that radical Islamic groups oppose liberal Islam's thought and agendas. The same argument can be transposed in that liberal Islam groups claim that their emergence is to anticipate the growing conservatism and Islamic radicalism in Indonesia.

Divergence

In terms of beliefs, radical Islam groups around the world usually share common doctrines, and teachings, although they can take different forms and practice in certain contexts. In Indonesia, attempts to realize that goal, should be preceded by shari'a implementation. Another shared doctrine of radical Islam is *jihad*. It should be noted that although jihad in the wider sense does not merely mean violence, to many radical Islam groups, it does carry the meaning. However, it should also be acknowledged that there are divergences among radical groups. Quintan Wiktorowicz argues, salafi groups can be classified into three categories, namely: purist, politicos and jihadist. The purist refers to salafi groups that are concerned with the purification of Islamic teachings from using propagation and educational means. Politicos choose to use political actions to spread their ideals. Jihadist differ from its counterparts as it sees the involvement of violence in their struggle as inevitable.⁷⁸

The same situation can also be found in the Indonesian salafi group when within salafi group a dispute emerged. The dispute was regarding the salafi's doctrines. The formation of *Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah*

⁷⁸ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movements," in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* Vol. 29 (2006), 207-239.

(FKASWJ) was triggered by the irreconcilable dispute between Ja'far Umar Thalib and Yusuf Baisa. In its later development, in response to the political situation in Indonesia, Ja'far's forum was involved in several political activities. This political involvement further worsened the relationship with other salafis as they consider involvement in political scheme as being not in accordance with salafi *manhaj*.⁷⁹ This also includes the use of jihad and violence in the salafi movement. In response to religiously motivated conflict in Maluku, Ja'far formed Laskar Jihad. The formation itself had previously been approved by scholars in the Middle East. However, when the jihad in Maluku was underway, Ja'far was considered as not fulfilling several requirements given by the scholars in order to do jihad. It is this reason that led a panel of salafi scholars in the Middle East to label Ja'far's jihad as deviant and not far removed from that of *ikhwan* that Ja'far himself criticised.⁸⁰

In spite of its dispute, Salafi share common views that can be seen as the universal doctrines of salafi movements, as mentioned earlier. The universal doctrines of radical Islam is applicable in the Indonesian context, although radical Islam in the country has also been enriched with other local issues, such as the rejection of Pancasila as the basis of state. Greg Fealy's finding confirms the divergent stance of radical Islam on certain issues. The four issues that Fealy assesses to identify differences among radical groups are: the adoption of comprehensive shari'ah, the issue of Islamic state, Islamic caliphate and

⁷⁹ International Crisis Group, "Indonesia Backgrounder: Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don't Mix", *ICG Asia Reports*, No. 83 (13 September 2004). Discussion on radical salafi in Indonesian Islam can also be found in Jamhari and Jajang Jahroni (eds), *Gerakan Salafi Radikal di Indonesia* (Radical Salafi Movements in Indonesia) (Jakarta: Rajawali Press: 2004).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

democracy. In respect to shari'a, all radical groups in Indonesia stand on the same position of the urgency of Indonesia to implement shari'a comprehensively. On the remaining three issues, they show obvious disagreement. On the founding of Islamic state, for example, DI/NII, JI, MMI, and Hizbut Tahrir share the same stance, while FPI and FKAJ do not see any urgency to found an Islamic state in Indonesia.⁸¹ Similarly, Khamami Zada also identifies the issues on which radical Islamic groups are struggling and are concerned about: the relation of Islam and the state, Islamic state, Islamic shari'a, Islam and democracy and women leadership.⁸²

It is important to note that almost all discussions on radical Islam in Indonesia give emphasis to the political aspects of the movements. It is academically correct to analyse radical Islamic movements from a political point of view, as a characteristic of these groups is based on their emphasis of the integrity of Islam and the state.⁸³ Also, as Youssef M Choueiri argues, modern and contemporary Islamic fundamentalism combines political actions with an ardent desire to discover original blueprints of a pious community and its ideological principles.⁸⁴ Therefore, it is obvious that there is a tendency to equate Islamic radicalism with political Islam. Consequently, it is uncommon to explore the tendency of the Arabization of Islam in Indonesia that can be pointed to as one

⁸¹ Greg Fealy, "Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia: The Faltering Revival?", *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2004, (Singapore: ISEAS, 2004).

⁸² Khamami Zada, *Islam Radikal: Pergulatan Ormas-Ormas Islam Garis Keras di Indonesia* (Radical Islam: The Dynamics of Hardline Islamic Organizations in Indonesia) (Jakarta: Teraju, 2002).

⁸³ Khamami Zada, *Islam Radikal: Pergulatan Ormas-Ormas Islam Garis Keras di Indonesia* (Radical Islam: The Dynamics of Hardline Islamic Organizations in Indonesia) (Jakarta: Teraju, 2002).

⁸⁴ Youssef M Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (London and Washington: Pinter, 1997), xvi.

of the undertaking of radical Islamic groups. There is a strong tendency to equate Islam with the Arab. The thesis that radical Islam has a tendency to be an Arabization is evident from the fact that current radical Islamic groups in Indonesia are mostly led by Arab-descendents.⁸⁵ This fact can not be disregarded in discussing Islamic radicalism in Indonesia. The Arabization tendency is also evident in the form of introduction and use of Arabic terms and customs in daily life. It is not simply a choice, but it is a choice that involves ideological considerations.

The proliferation of radical Islam in Indonesia cannot be regarded from one aspect or feature. It involves a wide range of factors that should be considered together. Radicalism is generated by global factors and Muslims' feelings of oppression by global hegemonic power together with local and indigenous factors also contribute to the rise of these movements. Ideological and primordial factors are also important to be considered in order to encompass a more comprehensive picture of the movements. Indeed, secularization, westernization and Islamic liberalism are the biggest challenges faced by Muslims.⁸⁶

Implications

The foregoing emphasis on moderate, progressive and conservative Islam has significant consequences for the dynamic of Muslim thought and movements in Indonesia. The most evident is the contestation of these groups in formulating

⁸⁵ Deliar Noer, "Preface" in Khamami Zada, *Islam Radikal: Pergulatan Ormas-Ormas Islam Garis Keras di Indonesia* (Radical Islam: The Dynamics of Hardline Islamic Organizations in Indonesia) (Jakarta: Teraju, 2002).

⁸⁶ Adian Husaini, "37 Tahun Gerakan Pembaruan Islam di Indonesia", *Suara Hidayatullah*, 22 January 2007.

Islamic doctrines and values in relation to Indonesian society. As Marty argues, fundamentalism is featured by its rejection of religious pluralism. This can be clearly seen in Indonesia, where Muslim fundamentalists challenge religious pluralism that progressive and liberal Muslims promote. There is also disagreement in terms of how Islam should treat western values in the context of Muslim daily life. For radicals, western ideals are perceived in terms of rivalry and contradictory to for Islam. In contrast, liberals advocate the adoption of western values so that Islam might be equivalent with the West. Liberals are struggling to introduce ideas such as democracy, gender equality and secularization that are seen as un-Islamic by radicals. Moderates believe that Western values have both positive and negative aspects and that adopting positive attributes of Western ideals may be beneficial to Indonesia.

Liberals, radicals and moderates also differ regarding the implementation of shari'a in Indonesia. Liberals see that shari'a should not be formally implemented in Indonesia, as it is the value that is embodied in those laws that is important and not its formal legislation.⁸⁷ Other liberal opinion says that the formalization of shari'a in Indonesia will make women as its first victims.⁸⁸ Radicals see shari'a as the only solution for ongoing problems which have

⁸⁷ See "Syafi'i Ma'arif: Perda Syari'ah Tidak Perlu", *Tempo Interaktif*, 19 Juni 2006. Bisa diakses melalui, <http://www.tempointeraktif.com/hg/nasional/2006/06/19/brk.20060619-79095.id.html>. Also Zuly Qodir, *Syariah Demoratik: Pemberlakuan Syari'ah Islam di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2004) and Maksun, "Formalisasi Syariat Islam dalam Konteks Kekinian" <http://islamlib.com/id/index.php?page=article&id=981>.

⁸⁸ See A.D. Kusumaningtyas, "Perempuan dalam Arus Formalisasi Syariat Islam: Sebuah Pengantar", paper presented in national seminar on *Perempuan dalam Arus Formalisasi Syariat Islam (Belajar dari Tasikmalaya, Garut, Cianjur, dan Banten)* 26 April 2004 Jakarta. See also, "Moeslim Abdurrahman: Korban Pertama Penerapan Syari'at Adalah Perempuan", <http://islamlib.com/id/index.php?page=article&id=175>

hindered Indonesia during the last decade.⁸⁹ There is a belief that Indonesian Muslims could live comfortably and give significant contribution to the country's development, if shari'a is properly implemented in the Indonesia.⁹⁰ The importance of implementing shari'a in Indonesia is often justified by faith (*akidah*). Ismail Yusanto, the spokesman of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) builds a firm relation between the struggle to formalize shari'a with aspects of *akidah* (faith), *iman* (belief) and *ibadah* (worshipping). He believes that struggle is required by Islamic *akidah*, and if the struggle of shari'a formalization is successful, that will correlate with the spirit of faith of society. Yusanto views the obligation to reinforce Islamic shari'a as *ma'lumun min al-dini bi al-dharurati* (something that is explicitly known in religion) that is parallel with the obligation of performing *ibadah mahdhah* (obliged worshipping) such as prayers, fasting in Ramadan, zakat and pilgrimage.⁹¹ Muh. Al-Khaththath, leader of Hizbut Tahrir disagrees that shari'a formalization could lead to the breakdown of Islam in Indonesia and views this reason as invalid (*bathil*). Rather, he believes shari'a formalization will be a uniting force for Indonesian society.⁹²

⁸⁹ Ust. M. Thalib, "Penegakan Syari'at Islam dalam Kehidupan Berbangsa dan Bernegara", dalam Irfan S. Awwas (ed), *Risalah Kongres Mujahidin I dan Penegakan Syari'ah Islam* (Yogyakarta: Wihdah Press, 2001), p. 43-52.

⁹⁰ Ust. M. Thalib, "Penegakan Syari'at Islam dalam Kehidupan Berbangsa dan Bernegara", in Irfan S. Awwas (ed), *Risalah Kongres Mujahidin I dan Penegakan Syari'ah Islam* (The Proceeding of 1st Mujahidin's Congress and Shari'a Islam Reinforcement) (Yogyakarta: Wihdah Press, 2001), 43-52.

⁹¹ M. Ismail Yusanto, "Menuju Penerapan Syari'ah: Di Antara Peluang dan Tantangan," (Toward Shari'a Application: Between Opportunity and Challenge) in Masykuri Abdillah (et.al), *Formalisasi Syari'at Islam di Indonesia: Sebuah Pergulatan yang Tak Pernah Tuntas* (Shari'a Formalization in Indonesia: A Never Ending Encounter) (Jakarta: Penerbit Renaisan and DPP Formasi, 2005), 295-316.

⁹² "Syari'ah Islam Justru Mempersatukan" (Shari'a Islam Is Even Uniting), *SAKSI*, No. 26, Year II/5 September 2000.

The variations of moderate, liberal-progressive and radical-fundamentalist Islam have an enormous impact on the dynamism of Islamic thought in Indonesia. Their influence and impact within Muhammadiyah will be discussed in the chapter three on the genealogy of conservative and progressive Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah.

CHAPTER III

THE GENEALOGY OF CONSERVATIVE AND PROGRESSIVE ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN MUHAMMADIYAH

The emergence of opposing conservative and progressive groups in Muhammadiyah marks a new phase of Muhammadiyah's development in the twenty first century.¹ The question is, what factors that caused the split in opinions within this organization. One possible answer is related to Muhammadiyah's puritanism. I argue that it is from this puritanism, Muhammadiyah is flexibly interpreted to the right and to the left. When the puritan doctrine is brought to the right, it creates conservative and scriptural views of Islam. In contrast, when it is brought to the left, it leads to liberal Islamic thought and from this point progressive Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah emerges. At one end, puritanism is manifested in form of guarding Muhammadiyah's *akidah* (faith) so that it is always sterile from contamination of ideas which may destroy Muhammadiyah's faith. At the other end, puritanism is also interpreted through contextualization of Muhammadiyah's teachings in response to contemporary issues developing in the recent world such as pluralism, multiculturalism, democracy, gender equality, dialogue of civilization and

¹ In 2012, Muhammadiyah will be 100 years old. This is significant because Islamic belief based on Prophet's hadith states that every one century there will be new reformers to every Muslim community. If this thought is literally taken, it could also be asserted that when Muhammadiyah turns 100, there will be new groups seeking to reform Muhammadiyah and even create a new Muhammadiyah. The progressives see that conservative views in Muhammadiyah should be reformed; the conservatives believe that they are responsible for reform. Therefore, beyond the factors that triggered the birth of these two groups, such a belief (myth?) can also be considered.

hermeneutics. The progressives tend to choose purification in the latter interpretation. For this reason, it is understandable that the tendency for progressive Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah cannot be separated from the need to respond to contemporary issues and to contextualize Muhammadiyah with the progress of the times and simultaneously offer a new interpretation of Islam that is not primordial and sectarian.

The divergence of thought that originates from the same point of departure is not new in Islamic history. The followers of Muhammad Abduh in Egypt, for example, split into two conflicting schools of thought. Rashid Rida, Sayyid Qutb and Hassan al-Banna are Abduh's disciples that developed conservative, scriptural and fundamentalist interpretations and understandings in Islamic thought, while Abduh's students and followers such as Mustafa Abd al-Raziq, Qasim Amin, Luthfi Assayyid and Ali Abd al-Raziq developed liberal understandings of Islam.² However, the circumstances that triggered the split are different in each case.

This chapter will be devoted to tracing the genealogy of conservative and progressive Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah. I argue that the rise of conservatism in Muhammadiyah is triggered by several factors: political, ideological and educational. On the other hand, the rise of progressivism in Muhammadiyah relates to two important factors, namely the stagnation of Muhammadiyah's intellectualism and the subsequent conservatism. In contrast, the birth of progressive Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah is also a product of the introduction of new discourses in Islamic

² Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), chapter 7, 161-192.

thought as well as the encounter of Muhammadiyah's young generation with broader communities.

Muhammadiyah: Modernism under Question

According to a popular version in Muhammadiyah circles, Ahmad Dahlan often defined Muhammadiyah as an *Islam yang berkemajuan* (Islam that is in accord with progress). This simple definition can be seen as a representation of basic characters of the Muhammadiyah movement. The idea of *Islam yang berkemajuan* was implemented by Dahlan in several actions that challenged general understandings of Islam at the time. To take an example, on returning from Mecca for study, Dahlan was involved in a dispute with senior clerics in the Kauman Yogyakarta when he sought correction of the direction of the prayer (*kiblat*).³ Dahlan's idea was rejected by his senior counterpart, and he later built his own little mosque and started expounding his reform ideas.⁴ Dahlan's progressive understanding of Islam is also evident in his interpretation of Surah al-Ma'un.⁵ In terms of religious practices and thought, Dahlan places reason and logic in a high position. According to Dahlan,

³ Kiblat can be loosely translated as direction of Mecca. It refers to the direction to which Muslims have to face when they perform prayers.

⁴ Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movements in Indonesia 1902-1942* (London: Oxford University Press), 74.

⁵ It is widely known that earlier generation of Muhammadiyah were involved in circles of Islamic teachings that were directly taught by Ahmad Dahlan. The surah that was taught was Surah al-Ma'un. From day to day, Dahlan never changed the subject and continued teaching this surah. One day, a protest by one of his pupils was addressed to him stating that why should they study this surah repeatedly and never move onto other subject. Responding to this protest, Dahlan uncovered the secret behind his teaching and asserted that al-Qur'an should not merely be read or even memorized. Instead, it should be applied in real life. Dahlan then asked his students to come along to see on orphanage and take care of them. This is, said Dahlan, the real application of Qur'an.

actions that are based on Qur'anic teachings are concrete implementations of Qur'an, and to do so Muslims must widen and sharpen the ability of reason through the use of logic.⁶ The use of reason in attempting to achieve Qur'anic interpretations is seen as consistent with doctrines of puritan Islam that Muhammad Abduh developed in Egypt.⁷

Dahlan promoted new methods of understanding Islam that is not leaving reason aside on the one hand, and tightly holding on the Qur'an and Sunna as two most important sources of Islamic teachings, on the other. The use of reason in understanding basic Islamic teachings is further enriched with the harmonization of text and context. The harmonization of text and context was one of the most important points in Muhammadiyah's success and it has also led Dahlan to respond to several challenges that he experienced during his time. Those challenges can be classified into the social and religious. The social factors faced by Dahlan were modernisation, traditionalism and Javaism (*Jawaisme*). Modernism was responded to in the forms of the founding of schools, scout movements, and other voluntary associations. Toward traditionalism and Javaism, there were two steps that Dahlan took, namely *tabligh* (propagation) in which he actively came to his students rather

⁶ Abdul Munir Mulkhan, *Pemikiran K.H.A. Dahlan dan Muhammadiyah Dalam Perspektif Perubahan Sosial* (Ahmad Dahlan's and Muhammadiyah's Thought in the Perspective of Social Changes) (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 1990), 8-15.

⁷ C. A. O. van Nieuwenhuijze, *Aspects of Islam in Post-colonial Indonesia: Five Essays* (The Hague : W. van Hoeve, 1958), 45. Many observers believe in the influence of Abduh's thought on Ahmad Dahlan. However, whether Dahlan was influenced by Abduh or not is still debated in academic circles. For an account on comparison of Muhammadiyah's and Abduh's thought, please refer to Arbiyah Lubis, *Pemikiran Muhammadiyah dan Muhammad Abduh: Suatu Studi Perbandingan* (The Muhammadiyah's and Muhammad Abduh's Thought: A Comparative Study) (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1993).

than waiting for them coming to him; and the second step was positive actions that is formulated as *amar ma'ruf* (persuading people to do good deeds) and *nahi munkar* (wisely prevent people from doing sins and not frontally attack them).⁸

From a religious perspective, it is worth noting that Muhammadiyah was born in the midst of acute decline of Islamic scholarship in almost the entire Muslim world. As a heritage of medieval Islamic spirit where critical reasoning was abandoned, Muslims showed their conformism to earlier generations' intellectual legacy and saw that they had provided solutions for problems that Muslims could face in the future. This situation is known as *taklid* which is defined by al-Syaukani as a blind adherence and practice of other people's (*imams*') opinions without being aware of reasons behind those opinions.⁹ As an effect of the imitative conformism, the Muslim world also faced a new challenge in the form of belief among a majority of Muslims that the gate of *ijtihad*¹⁰ has been closed. Since *ijtihad* plays a very important role in the progress of Muslim scholarship, the closure of the *ijtihad* gate certainly meant a decline and stultification of Muslim scholarship. In this situation, the emergence of Muslim reformers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897), Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) and Muhammad Rashid Rida (d. 1935) in Egypt; Shah Wali Allah (d. 1762) and Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) in India was in response to such a decline. These Muslim reformers urged for the importance of *ijtihad* to

⁸ Kuntowijoyo, "Jalan Baru Muhammadiyah" (New Muhammadiyah's Path), Preface in Abdul Munir Mulkhan, *Islam Murni dalam Masyarakat Petani* (Pure Islam in the Peasant Society) (Yogyakarta: Bentang Budaya, 2000), xi-xx.

⁹ Muhammad Ali al-Syaukani, *Irsyad al-Fukhul* (Egypt: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), 265.

¹⁰ *Ijtihad* is antonym of *taklid* that is generally defined as legal independent reasoning.

reconstruct the building of Muslim intellectualism. In Indonesia, such a reform movement was pioneered by Ahmad Dahlan and was influenced by those Muslim reformers in Egypt and India.¹¹ Given the important role of *ijtihad* in Islamic thought and the position of reason that Dahlan believed, Muhammadiyah responded through its doctrine of *ittiba'*¹² and *ijtihad*. Muhammadiyah urges that the gate of *ijtihad* is always open and must never be shut.

From this point, *ittiba'* and *ijtihad* are two most important elements that characterize Muhammadiyah as *tajdid* (reform) movement. However, there is a belief that Muhammadiyah never formally claimed itself as *tajdid* movement.¹³ Therefore, it is hardly surprising that in the earlier period (1912-1988), the *tajdid* formulation was never clearly stated in Muhammadiyah's official document. Instead, Muhammadiyah argues that *tajdid* is inherent to the nature of Islam. The conception of *tajdid* was later formulated at the 22nd Tarjih Council's National Congress in Malang (1989). According to this formulation, *tajdid* is described as *pembaharuan* (purification) and *modernisasi* (modernization). Purification is an attempt to preserve Islamic teaching from deviant and infidel influences, while modernization is aimed at interpreting,

¹¹ Wilfred C Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1957), 81. See also H.A.R. Gibb, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam* (London: EJ Brill, Luzac & Co., 1960), 409.

¹² *Ittiba'* is conscious following of one or more imams' teachings. Different from *taklid* that means imitative conformism, *ittiba'* requires understanding of reason behind certain imams' teaching.

¹³ Ahmad Jainuri, "Muhammadiyah dalam Dimensi Tajdid (Tinjauan Pemikiran Keagamaan)" (Muhammadiyah in Tajdid Dimension [Religious Thought Perspective]) in Maryadi and Abdullah Aly (eds), *Muhammadiyah dalam Kritik* (Criticism for Muhammadiyah) (Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press, 2000).

experiencing, and implementing Islamic values in social life.¹⁴ This doctrine is then coupled with Muhammadiyah's mantra of *kembali kepada al-Qur'an and Sunnah* (back to Qur'an and Sunnah), which means that Muhammadiyah is not ideologically dependent on one of four Islamic jurisprudences schools and refers all problems directly to the Qur'an and Sunna. However, the mantra also created a problem for the dynamics of Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah as there has been a shifting paradigm in viewing and practicing it. According to Kuntowijoyo, the maxim of 'back to Qur'an and Sunnah' is ambiguous since it can be interpreted in terms of limitation as well as liberation.¹⁵ By limitation, it means that Muhammadiyah does not practice any teachings that were not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an and not exemplified by Prophet Mohammed. At this point, therefore, Muhammadiyah's doctrines of being against *takhayul* (myth), *bid'ah* (heresy) and *khurafat* (syncretism) can be situated. In contrast, by liberation, it means that 'back to Qur'an and Sunna' gives a greater opportunity to freely interpret Qur'anic teaching without a fatalistic conformism to and dependence on any previous schools' Imams. This is possible, since 'back to Qur'an and Sunnah' in the "liberation" sense requires an adherence to the principal and ethical values of Qur'an and not on its textual meaning. In this regard, Ahmad Dahlan practiced 'back to Qur'an and Sunna' in the sense of liberation and not

¹⁴ "Tanfidz Keputusan Muktamar Tarjih Muhammadiyah ke XXII" (The Codification of 22nd Muhammadiyah's Tarjih Council) *Berita Resmi Muhammadiyah*, special edition, 47-48.

¹⁵ Kuntowijoyo, "Jalan Baru Muhammadiyah" (New Muhammadiyah's Path), Preface in Abdul Munir Mulkhan, *Islam Murni dalam Masyarakat Petani* (Pure Islam in the Peasant Society) (Yogyakarta: Benteng Budaya, 2000), xi-xx.

limitation,¹⁶ while the majority of Muhammadiyah's members in the current context are practicing back to Qur'an and Sunna in the limitation sense.¹⁷

By this description, these three elements of *tajdid*, *ijtihad* and back to Qur'an and Sunnah are the three most important pillars of Muhammadiyah. Although they are theoretically and conceptually distinguishable, they are inseparable. The separation of these three elements will mean that Muhammadiyah will lose its élan, which is vital to it being a *tajdid* movement.¹⁸ On the other hand, by declaring itself as *tajdid* movement that is against *taqlid* and calling for being back to Qur'an and Sunnah, that also means that Muhammadiyah is a scripturalist movement. The scripturalist tendency of Muhammadiyah becomes more evident when the Muhammadiyah's members practice 'back to Qur'an and Sunna' in limitation sense as has been stated before. Considering *ijtihad*, the scriptural tendency of Muhammadiyah basically can be resolved by the use of *ijtihad* that Muhammadiyah strongly urges. Moreover, Muhammadiyah has an established methodology of *ijtihad*. Muhammadiyah's methods of *ijtihad* are *ijtihad bayani*, *ijtihad qiyasyi* and *ijtihad*

¹⁶ Abdul Munir Mulkhan argues that bid'ah should be contextually and progressively interpreted. If bid'ah is confined to the meaning of doing practices that were not exemplified by Prophet, what Ahmad Dahlan did by founding Muhammadiyah can be regarded as bid'ah. Since Dahlan was inspired by Surah Ali Imran: 104 (Interview with Abdul Munir Mulkhan, 4 September 2006 in Yogyakarta).

¹⁷ See Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *Independensi Muhammadiyah di Tengah Pergumulan Islam dan Politik* (Muhammadiyah's Independence in the Midst of Islamic and Political Thought) (Jakarta: Cidesindo and Dinamika, 2000), 19-20.

¹⁸ M. Amin Abdullah, "Manhaj Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam" (Tarjih Method and the Proliferation of Islamic Thought), in Muhammad Azhar and Hamim Ilyas (ed), *Pengembangan Pemikiran Keagamaan di Muhammadiyah: Antara Purifikasi dan Dinamisasi* (The Proliferation of Religious Thought in Muhammadiyah: Between Purification and Dinamization) (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar and LPPI, 2000), 1-17.

istishlahi.¹⁹ These methods of *ijtihad* were later revised into *ijtihad bayani* (semantic), *ta'lili* (rationalist), and *istishlahi* (philosophical).²⁰ Muhammadiyah also shows a progressive inclination by adopting a concept of *ijtihad jama'i* or collective *ijtihad* rather than following classical requirements of performing *ijtihad*.²¹ In addition to revising the methods of *ijtihad*, the revised formulation also mentioned the approaches and techniques accompanying those methods. The approaches of *ijtihad* consist of *al-tafsir al-ijtima'i al-ma'asyir* (hermeneutics), *al-tarikhiyyah* (historical), *al-susiulujiyyah* (sociological) and *al-antrufulujiyyah* (anthropological).²²

However, there is a significant gap between conceptual level and practical level. In fact, *ijtihad* is rarely implemented and therefore it remains a slogan. While *ijtihad* is usually used to respond to contemporary developments, Muhammadiyah shows reluctance to this. The reason behind this failure is that although Muhammadiyah is a modern Islamic movement, in terms of theological stand, Muhammadiyah adopts salafi theology.²³ Consequently, this prevents

¹⁹ *Bayani* is a method of law deduction that uses language approaches. *Ta'lili*, is a method of Islamic law deduction that emphasizes on the use of reasoning approach. *Istishlahi* is a method law deduction that orientates to the fulfillment of public goods.

²⁰ PP Muhammadiyah, *Hasil Keputusan Munas Majelis Tarjih ke-XXIV* (Malang: Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, 29-31 Januari 2000), Appendix I.

²¹ In classical term, *ijtihad* as an independent legal reasoning can only be performed by *mujtahid*. Classical muslim scholars have set certain requirements for *mujtahid*. Among others, a *mujtahid* should be good in Arabic, deeply understand important branches of Islamic studies such as Qur'anic studies, *asbab al-nuzul* (historical event behind the revelation), *hadith studies*, *asbab al-wurud* (historical events behind the issuance of a *hadith* by prophet), etc. By *ijtihad jama'i*, those classical understanding of *ijtihad* is contextualized by collecting several experts in respective field. When it comes into contemporary issues such as bio-ethics, *ijtihad jama'i* could also involve experts outside of Islamic studies disciplines.

²² *Hasil Keputusan Tarjih*, Chapter III.

²³ Salafi in this context is Islamic movements that have internal orientation, namely purifying Islamic teaching from heresy, myth and syncretism. In this regard, salafi movements believe that one of the

Muhammadiyah to be flexible and responsive in dealing with contemporary situations. Another reason is that as a scriptural Islamic movement, Muhammadiyah will face theological tension between free reasoning and rigid textual doctrines when *ijtihad* is employed to respond to newly-emerging issues, especially when the problems are theologically-related. In this context, it can be fully understood that although discussion on the reopening of *ijtihad* gate occur in Muhammadiyah, every single attempt to comprehensively criticize literature of hadith and the history of Islamic law formation tend to be ignored. This neglect is based on reason that such criticism can potentially lead to the critical studies of the Qur'an that is believed can threaten not only scripturalists's position but also loosen Islamic fundamentals.²⁴ This is the dilemma that Muhammadiyah faces, that while *ijtihad* requires a maximum use of reasoning, back to Qur'an and Sunnah implies the tight adherence on the textual meaning of the Qur'an.

Based on this reason, it is not surprising that during the last two decades many critiques were addressed to question Muhammadiyah's modernity and its status as a modernist Islamic movement in Indonesia. Muhammadiyah is seen as not as progressive as its traditionalist counterpart Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) in responding to new ideas in contemporary Islamic thought and more specifically that Muhammadiyah was trapped in legal-related perspectives as a result of Majelis

most important root causes for the decline of Islamic civilization is its *umma*'s attitude in practicing corrupt Islamic teachings. Therefore, if Muslims expect Islam to be triumphant, they have to practice pristine Islam. See, Azyumardi Azra "Salafisme" *Republika*, 14 April 2005.

²⁴ Azra, p. 284-285.

Tarjih's orientations on legal and juridical aspects of Islam. Regarding Muhammadiyah's modernity, observers, including insiders, have different views on the subject. Amin Abdullah argues that the modernity of Muhammadiyah is only the case on the physical aspects of this movement. Muhammadiyah is modern in terms of management, organization, administration and education systems and not in aspect of thought. In the aspect of Islamic thought, Abdullah argues, Muhammadiyah is not modern at all.²⁵ Similarly, Azyumardi Azra distinguishes Muhammadiyah's modernity in terms of practical and ideological dimensions. On the level of practical dimension, Azra asserts, Muhammadiyah's modernity is unchallenged. However, as to the ideological aspect, it is hard to believe that Muhammadiyah is a modern Islamic movement.²⁶ The late Nurcholish Madjid was also critical, arguing that the overwhelming attention that Muhammadiyah paid on activism aspects of this movement has made Muhammadiyah to be less intellectualized and less reflective. On a philosophical level intellectual reflection is urgently needed not only as a tool that allows comprehensive awareness on all Muhammadiyah activism, but also to be an energy source for the dynamic and creative activism. Therefore, Madjid concludes that compared to smaller Islamic movements such as *Jama'at-i Islami* in Pakistan or

²⁵ Interview with Amin Abdullah, Yogyakarta, 12-13 September 2006.

²⁶ Azyumardi Azra, "Mengkaji Ulang Modernisme Muhammadiyah" (Rethinking Muhammadiyah's Modernism) in Usman Yatim and Almisar Hamid (eds.), *Muhammadiyah dalam Sorotan* (Muhammadiyah under Criticism) (Jakarta: PT. Bina Rena Pariwara, 1993), p. 282-83.

Jama'at-i Ulama'-i Hind in India, Muhammadiyah is left behind in terms of intellectual development.²⁷

Conversely, Ahmad Jainuri believes that theoretically, the basic characteristics of Muhammadiyah as *tajdid* (modern) movement are in accordance with those formulated by scholars. It is clear that as a concept, modernism is highly contested. Among those contesting concepts are Fazlur Rahman's and John O Voll's formulation. Using this formulation, Jainuri believes that Muhammadiyah can be classified as a modern Islamic movement. Furthermore, Jainuri also presents conceptions of modernism of other scholars such as Daniel Lerner, David McClelland, Alex Inkeles and David Smith.²⁸ In this regard, Jainuri is convinced that Muhammadiyah's modernism is in agreement with modernism characteristics as articulated by those scholars. However, Jainuri acknowledges that Muhammadiyah's modernism that was formulated in the initial period of Muhammadiyah in the early 20th century, is designed to answer issues of that time and therefore, this formulation does not reflect Muhammadiyah's development in the late twentieth century.²⁹ At this point, Jainuri still maintains that Muhammadiyah is a modernist movement although he also implicitly agrees with the need for reformulating Muhammadiyah's thought when facing contemporary situations, socially, politically and religiously.

²⁷ Nurcholish Madjid, "Aqidah Islam yang Perlu Dikembangkan sebagai Landasan Pemikiran dan Amal Muhammadiyah" in Sujarwanto, et. al (eds), *Muhammadiyah dan Tantangan Masa Depan: Sebuah Dialog Intelektual* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1990), p. 407-19.

²⁸ Ahmad Jainuri, p. 23-37.

²⁹ Ibid.

Broadly speaking, when the social setting of Muhammadiyah's birth is assessed, it shows that there is a shifting social context between the time of Muhammadiyah's birth and the current situation. Socially, Indonesian society 100 years ago can be classified as an agricultural society, and in such a context, the idea of reform that Dahlan offered was able to answer social challenges at the time. Agricultural society prioritizes symbolic elements in religion³⁰, and as such, Dahlan offered a substantive way of practicing religion. In a contemporary context, while Indonesian society is no longer agricultural, it has not yet entered on industrial or post industrial society. Consequently, Indonesian society is in a stage of transition situated between agricultural and industrial society. In such a social context, a reformulation of Muhammadiyah's basic doctrines is unavoidable. Following Fazlur Rahman's words, this changing situation requires Muslims to perform semantic reconstruction.³¹ The consequence of this change for Muhammadiyah is clear in that it can not maintain itself as an Islamic movement that prioritizes religious puritanism or purification of Islam. Future challenges, according to Bahtiar Effendy, will be faced by Islamic organizations in presenting a functional Islam in the midst of unprecedented civilization changes. In this context, progressives believe that it is time for Muhammadiyah to rethink functions of its presence for Indonesian Muslim society. In the past, modernism, traditionalism, and Javaism were the *raison d'être*

³⁰ Kuntowijoyo, "Islam dan Budaya Lokal" (Islam and Local Culture) in *Tarjih: Jurnal Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam* (Tarjih: The Journal of Islamic Thought Proliferation), Vol. I, Dec 1996, 63-71.

³¹ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of An Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 151-162.

for the birth of Muhammadiyah. Since these challenges have changed and become more complex, Muhammadiyah must question the relevance its earlier thinking.³² In this regard, the adaptation to a new situation will certainly lead Muhammadiyah to reconstruct its modernization paradigm. For a very long period, Muhammadiyah has been successful in maintaining its momentum. According to Morsel, Muhammadiyah's success lies in its ability to adapt, ability to face and overcome new challenges. These challenges could originate from internal social dynamics, external social contacts, the impacts of natural power, or other sources, and a society or community that has engaged the process of modernization has to be able to accept any kinds of changes.³³

Definitions of modernism vary considerably, but common features would include, as set by Inkeles and Smith: a) the willingness to accept new ideas and experiences, b) democratic in accepting and appreciating others' views, and c) having great concern on planning, organization and efficiency, future-oriented and belief on the enforcement of the equality.³⁴ Bringing this formulation into Muhammadiyah's context will reveal that Muhammadiyah's modernity is under serious question. If by modern means willingness to accept new ideas and experiences, this is true for Muhammadiyah's previous characters but not the recent one. Rather than openness in accepting new ideas and experiences, contemporary Muhammadiyah is inclined to

³² Bahtiar Effendy, "K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, Muhammadiyah dan Umat Islam Indonesia", *Republika*, 31 January 2002.

³³ Chandler Morsel, et. al, *Modernization by Design: Social Change in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 36.

³⁴ Alex Inkeles and David H Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1974), 19-23.

reject new thinking, especially ideas regarding progressive and liberal Islamic thought. As to planning, organization and efficiency, it is clear that Muhammadiyah can be classified as a modern movement. In this context, Abdullah's criticism of Muhammadiyah as modern in its physical aspects and Azra's identification of modernity of Muhammadiyah in practical dimensions is confirmed.

While modernity or modernism is often characterized with positive images, it should not be overlooked that modernism is also intrinsically motivated by prejudice to others. Modernism assumes that modernists are the most conducive group to accept the idea of progress and that non-modernists are barrier for progress. Islamic reform and purification movements in Indonesia, including Muhammadiyah, have such a prejudice especially when it comes to the topic of relation of Islam and culture.

The discussion above shows that Muhammadiyah has been facing many problems in relation to its self-proclaimed *tajdid* orientation. Muhammadiyah's birth was primarily motivated by reform ideas and Muhammadiyah's early years have shown its ability to promote a more rational, moderate, modern and progressive way to the Indonesian Islam context. However, the contradictions within Muhammadiyah's doctrines indicate that it is increasingly trapped in a dilemma. The dilemma is that while Muhammadiyah has to keep its social activism, this leads it to be less intellectualized and therefore stagnant. On the other hand, while Muhammadiyah is often cited as a modern Islam movement in Indonesia, scholars question Muhammadiyah's modernity due to fact that it shows reluctance to accept new ideas and appear to be more conservative than it should be. Muhammadiyah's

modernity and progressiveness are under serious question and the rise of conservatism and the stagnation of this organization in responding and producing new Islamic thought has been a remarkable feature of contemporary Muhammadiyah.

A Vicious Circle of Conservatism and Progressivism

Considering this situation, we can gain an understanding as to why Muhammadiyah has been widely criticised during the last two decades. To be precise, those criticisms came to the fore at Muhammadiyah's 41st congress in Surakarta in 1985. According to the critics, Muhammadiyah was no longer progressive and responsive enough to respond creatively to rapid and unprecedented social and political changes. As has been briefly discussed above, Nurcholish Madjid viewed one of the most significant factors causing this situation to be overwhelming attention that Muhammadiyah paid on its social activism in the forms of looking after social economic units (*amal usaha*) in the field of health, education and social welfare. This is certainly one factor. However, when the factors at the ideological and epistemological level are considered, the situation is far more serious.

Muhammad Azhar and Hamim Ilyas, in their editorial introduction for *Pengembangan Pemikiran Keislaman di Muhammadiyah: Antara Purifikasi dan Dinamisasi* (The Proliferation of Islamic Thought in Muhammadiyah: Between Purification and Dynamization) they identify several important factors behind this stagnation. First, there is the domination of Aristotelian and Newtonian approaches which emphasize the prominence of positivism in producing knowledge in

Muhammadiyah's thought. Second, Muhammadiyah takes a *fiqh*-based approach to solving problems as a result of the founding of the Tarjih Council. Consequently, other aspects of religious thought such as theology, ethics, and social sciences are ignored. In addition, the overwhelming attention to aspects of *fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence has outweighed aspects of Islamic law methodologies (*ushul al-fiqh*). Third, the domination of textual and normative understanding of Islam tends to leave contextual and historical studies of Islam aside. Fourth, there is the problem of a dichotomy of intellectual versus 'ulama or *kitab kuning* and *kitab putih* in Muhammadiyah. Lastly, the introduction of new issues such as pluralism, democracy, civil society, and gender equality is also seen a factor.³⁵

The combination of those problems has contributed to the stagnation of Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah. These issues also show that Muhammadiyah tends to adhere to older doctrines inherited from an earlier generation of leaders rather than contextually develop new epistemological basis in dealing with contemporary situations. Interestingly, among the factors that Azhar and Ilyas identify, there is only one external factor. While there may be other external factors for the stagnation and the rise of conservatism within Muhammadiyah, it is the internal which have had the most influence. As discussed earlier, Muhammadiyah's *tajdid* and *ijtihad* has been under serious question and it is not an exaggeration, in my

³⁵ Muhammad Azhar and Hamim Ilyas (ed), Editor's Preface in *Pengembangan Pemikiran Keagamaan di Muhammadiyah: Antara Purifikasi dan Dinamisasi* (The Proliferation of Religious Thought in Muhammadiyah: Between Purification and Dinamization) (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar and LPPI, 2000), iii-vi.

opinion, Muhammadiyah has slowly turned into Dahlanism. By Dahlanism, what I mean is that Muhammadiyah's members in the current context prefer to preserve Dahlan teachings and do not critically and contextually think to bring those teachings into contemporary settings. If Dahlan's teachings are carefully assessed it is obvious that he always correlated textual meaning of the Qur'an with the social context. Dahlan, according to Syafiq A Mughni, is a figure with specialty. He developed rational understanding of Islam by building an epistemological basis, while at the same time he was able to bring those epistemological formulations down to earth.³⁶ Unfortunately, Muhammadiyah members do not bring –to borrow phenomenological terms—the aspect of *neumena* of Dahlan's teaching. Rather, they preserve the *pheunomena* aspect of Dahlan's examples. That is, Muhammadiyah's members do not adopt what Amien Abdullah calls “the basic principle of ethical values” from Dahlan teachings. In this respect what Arkoun termed as *taqdis al-fikr al-diny* (the sacralization of religious thought) can be presented to explain Muhammadiyah's case.

The tendency of sacralization of Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah is evident from its members' attitude and approach toward *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih* (HPT or Compilation of Tarjih Council's Fatawas). As far as HPT is concerned, Muhammadiyah's members will put it in a respectful position. All debatable problems, especially those which are legal-related will always be referred to HPT. This constitutes standard procedure in Muhammadiyah when a disputable issue emerges. Consequently, HPT functions as the book of fatawa that has potential to be

³⁶ Interview with Syafiq A Mughni, in Sidoarjo, East Java, 24 September 2006.

sacralized. Theoretically speaking, in the structure of Islamic epistemology, HPT represents religious interpretation. Following Arkoun's words, religious interpretations and human reasoning on religious doctrines are *qabilun li al-niqash wa al-taghyir* (open for reductions and changes). While, in Muhammadiyah context, the strict and blind adherence of Muhammadiyah members to HPT shows that HPT is *ghairu qabilun li al-niqash wa al-taghyir* (not open for reductions and changes). This inevitably creates anomalies for Muhammadiyah. Firstly, HPT is a product of human reasoning, and as such can not be separated from historical and psychological situations of society where reasoning and interpretations are produced. The shift of religious interpretations and reasoning have to take into account three interrelated elements of "language", "thought" and "history".³⁷ That is, religious interpretation and reasoning are not space and time-free. This means that the change of time and space context requires change in religious interpretations. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah formulates this time and space related changes in the phrase of *yaduru al-hukmu ma'a illatihi wujudan wa adaman*³⁸ that the presence or absence of law will depend on its ratio legis or ethical values. The strict adherence and reference of Muhammadiyah to HPT, deliberately or not, has paved the way to sacralization.

Secondly, another anomaly is related to Muhammadiyah's position regarding the authority of Islamic jurisprudence schools. Muhammadiyah's doctrines say that it

³⁷ M. Amin Abdullah, "Manhaj Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam" (Tarjih Method and the Proliferation of Islamic Thought), in Muhammad Azhar and Hamim Ilyas (eds.), *Pengembangan Pemikiran Keagamaan di Muhammadiyah: Antara Purifikasi dan Dinamisasi* (The Proliferation of Religious Thought in Muhammadiyah: Between Purification and Dinamization) (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar and LPPI, 2000), 1-17.

³⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah, *I'lam al-Muwaqqiin*

does not exclusively adopt or depend on one of those schools, this principle is known as *talfiq*. However, by sacralizing HPT, Muhammadiyah does not only violate its own principle but also has gradually created a newly established Islamic jurisprudence school namely the School of Tarjih or HPT. It should be noted that the adoption of *talfiq* by Muhammadiyah intrinsically means the allowance of diversity to adopt any Islamic jurisprudence schools among Muhammadiyah members. Therefore, the tendency to adhere strictly to HPT as “the only” reliable sources of fatawa in Muhammadiyah, is basically at odd with Muhammadiyah’s principle. On this point, Moeslim Abdurrahman’s anxiety is worth-considering. Abdurrahman views that rather than becoming a think tank body for Muhammadiyah, Tarjih Council has become a body of fatawa within Muhammadiyah which is insensitive to social changes.³⁹

Following severe criticisms addressed at the Tarjih Council, Muhammadiyah sought to respond to the adversity. One of those attempts was initiated at the 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Aceh, in 1995, where the Tarjih Council which was initially responsible for overcoming *fiqh*-related problem in Muhammadiyah, was extended into the new field of Islamic thought. Accordingly, the council was renamed as *Majelis Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam* (The Council of Tarjih and the Proliferation of Islamic Thought) and came under Amin Abdullah’s leadership. Since then, the council sought to reformulate a new methodology for Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah. Syamsul Arifin records that during his leadership in the council,

³⁹ Interview with Moeslim Abdurrahman, in Jakarta, 28 September 2006.

Amin Abdullah pioneered deep and systematic studies on crucial themes faced by contemporary Muslims.⁴⁰ Like Arifin, Sukidi also believes that Amin Abdullah is a proponent of liberalization of thinking in Muhammadiyah.⁴¹

One important distinction between Tarjih Council under Amin Abdullah's chairmanship and its previous predecessors was the serious attention that Abdullah paid to the construction of methodology of Islamic thought that is not merely based on legal-studies orientation. Amin Abdullah combines philosophical approaches with classical Islamic legal-studies that has been adopted by previous Tarjih Council so far. One of Abdullah's innovations was the "spider-web" paradigm in Islamic studies. This paradigm offers a new way of understanding and approaching Islamic discourse namely the introduction and employment of a multidisciplinary approach in Islamic discourse. The multidisciplinary method has also been applied to practical issues that Muhammadiyah deals with, namely inter-religious social interaction and reorientation of Muhammadiyah's attitude to local culture and tradition.⁴²

However, Amin Abdullah's attention to the methodological project of Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah is regarded as too philosophical and to some extent has outweighed legal-aspects that were the main concern of Tarjih Council. Consequently, many misgivings were addressed to Tarjih Council as the agent of Islamic liberalization in Muhammadiyah. Skepticism was evident with conservatives

⁴⁰ Syamsul Arifin, "Proliferasi Pemikiran Islam di Muhammadiyah" (The Proliferation of Islamic Thought in Muhammadiyah), *Republika*, 14 June 2005.

⁴¹ Sukidi, "MUhammadiyah Liberal dan Anti-Liberal" (Liberal and Anti-Liberal Muhammadiyah), *TEMPO Magazine*, No. 20/XXXIV/11-17 July 2005.

⁴² These two subjects and the response of conservative groups within Muhammadiyah will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

in Muhammadiyah jokingly renaming *Majelis Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam* (The Council of Tarjih and the Proliferation of Islamic Thought) as *Majelis Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam* (The Council of Tarjih and the Disorientation of Islamic Thought). This satire comes from disappointment and mistrusts of the majority of Muhammadiyah's members with what Amin Abdullah introduced.⁴³

On this point, an important vicious circle of shift occurred. The new orientation of Tarjih Council was designed to refresh the stagnation of Muhammadiyah in Islamic thought and scientific works have been done to meet the assigned jobs. However, while this council has paved the way to achieving the objected goal, resistance was greater than the support that this council received. Suyoto argues that the resistance is nothing to do with the agenda that Tarjih Council promoted. The basic problem, Suyoto identifies, is in communication strategies of Tarjih members. In other words, it does not really matter whether the methodology contains liberal or so-called liberal Islamic thought as long as it is delivered in a more popular way, using ordinary language rather than high level philosophical and sophisticated language and terms.⁴⁴ To a certain extent, Suyoto's explanation can be presented to understand this situation. However, this seems to be an over-exaggeration and simplistic. If it is analysed further, it will be apparent that the rejection to the new methodology that was offered by Abdullah's Tarjih was

⁴³ Email interview with Wawan Gunawan Abdul Wahid, March 26, 2007.

⁴⁴ Interview with Suyoto, in Gresik-East Java, 6 September 2006.

primarily relating to the contents. It is also important to note here that it was rejected before the subject was comprehensively understood. Interestingly, the opposing group argues that it was pointless to try to understand what Tarjih Council was offering since the deviances that it brings is clear.⁴⁵

Resistance to Tarjih Council was growing and the conservative tendency in Muhammadiyah continued. As a result, a response to it also emerged. In the late 2003, a group of young generation Muhammadiyah set up a network called *Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah* (JIMM, Muhammadiyah Young Intellectual Network).⁴⁶ The network differs from any other Muhammadiyah's affiliate in that JIMM is not an *ortom*⁴⁷, and does not have an organized structure. Consequently, JIMM is not entitled to have an office in Muhammadiyah headquarters in Jakarta or Yogyakarta. This network has around 200 members across Indonesia and is coordinated by what are called presidium that are spread in several cities: Jakarta, Yogyakarta and Malang. According to Moeslim Abdurrahman, an important personality behind JIMM's establishment, there were two main purposes of JIMM's foundation, namely the reactivation of intellectual tradition in Muhammadiyah and as response to the rise of religious conservatism in Muhammadiyah.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Interview with Fakhurrozi Reno Sutan, in Jakarta, 29 September 2006.

⁴⁶ "Membebaskan Teks, Meruntuhkan Hegemoni" (Liberate the Text, Diminishing the Hegemony), *Republika*, 17 October 2003.

⁴⁷ Ortom is an abbreviation of *organisasi otonom* (autonomous organizations) which refers to organizations affiliated to Muhammadiyah such as Aisiyah (Women Section of Muhammadiyah), Pemuda Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Youth Movement), Nasyi'atul Aisiyah (Muhammadiyah Young Women Section), Ikatan Mahasiswa Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Students Association) and Ikatan Remaja Muhammadiyah (Muhammadiyah Adolescence Association).

⁴⁸ *Republika*, 21 November 2003

Similarly, Zuly Qodir, one of JIMM's presidium members, identifies three factors leading to JIMM's conception. Firstly, the domination of the conservative group in Muhammadiyah. According to Qodir, the conservative group has perceived and treated Muhammadiyah merely as mechanistic and not as an intellectual organization. As a result, it is no longer progressive in interpreting and responding to new changes and challenges. As a response to Muhammadiyah's conservatism and its overwhelming attention to *amal usaha*, JIMM moved in a different direction to those conservatives by involving themselves in intellectual activities. Secondly, the intensive interaction of Muhammadiyah young generation with people of other religious traditions have contributed to the rise of JIMM. This has sharpened the awareness of Muhammadiyah young generation and has led them to adopt pluralism as a new method of association. Thirdly, rapid development of Islamic discourse requires a progressive response, and therefore, a conservative style will not able to respond to actual problems that are always arising.⁴⁹

According to Ahmad Najib Burhani, one of the Muhammadiyah young intellectuals, JIMM came together for three important reasons: to safeguard Muhammadiyah's *tajdid* movements, to fill the gap of intellectual disparities between older and younger generation in Muhammadiyah and in response global challenges.⁵⁰ It is interesting, that as an Islamic movement that was previously known for its

⁴⁹ Zuly Qodir, "Bangkitnya 'Second' Muhammadiyah" (The Resurgence of Second Muhammadiyah), *Kompas*, 20 November 2003.

⁵⁰ Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah (JIMM): Pemberontakan Melawan Puritanisme dan Skripturalisme Persyarikatan" in *Gerakan Keislaman Pasca Orde Baru: Upaya Merambah Dimensi Baru Islam* (Jakarta: Depag RI, 2006).

intellectual figures, Muhammadiyah currently experiences the lack of intellectuals in the level of its younger generation. This may not be recognised within Muhammadiyah, but has not gone unnoticed by observers. The *Republika* daily, for example, in one of its reports on JIMM writes: "On the elite level, Muhammadiyah has plenty of high-class intellectuals. But, there is an anxiety that on the next level there is vacuum".⁵¹ This can be as an acknowledgement that intellectual stagnation that Muhammadiyah has been experiencing has also produced a significant gap among Muhammadiyah's generations. Zakiyuddin Baidhaw, another JIMM presidium member, argues that JIMM aims to criticize Muhammadiyah's internal condition and deconstruct three "jails" of ritualism, formalism and structuralism and replace them with progressive and liberal ideas and activities. JIMM, Zakiyuddin concludes, was born from a feeling of anxiety of Muhammadiyah young generation on those problems.

In short, JIMM's emergence was motivated by internal as well as external factors. At the internal level, it is clear that JIMM was designed to challenge conservative Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah and also to respond to the stagnation of Muhammadiyah intellectualism. Although these two factors are different, they can not be separated. Intellectual stagnation originated from the reluctance to dealing with new changes and this is the basic characteristic of conservatism. In this respect, the less Muhammadiyah is intellectualized, the more conservative it will be. JIMM declared itself as a community of intellectuals in Muhammadiyah that will cut the

⁵¹ "Intelektualitas untuk Praksis" (Intellectualism for Praxis), *Republika*, 21 November 2003.

link of Islamic conservatism in this organization. On the external level, JIMM is a synthesis of wide interaction that Muhammadiyah's young generation have. The interaction is not only physical such as Qodir describes, but also ideological. The feeling that Muhammadiyah is mired in conservatism and formalism, for example, will not transform into actual awareness if Muhammadiyah young generation do not interact with ideas of Islamic liberalism or Islamic rebellion that are campaigned by contemporary Muslim scholars such as Nashr Hamid Abu Zaid, Hassan Hanafi, Mohammed Arkoun and Abdul Karim Soroush. From these scholars JIMM adopts a theoretical basis that is later developed as its doctrines. Furthermore, JIMM was also influenced by contemporary social theories such as Paulo Freire's pedagogy and other contemporary social scientists.

As an intellectual movement, JIMM declares itself as standing on three pillars: hermeneutic; critical social sciences; and new social movements. The adoption of hermeneutic is designed as a tool of analysis when JIMM deals with textual basis of Islamic teaching. As Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd asserts, Islam is a textual civilization.⁵² JIMM also believes that in responding to new developments in the field of Islamic thought and social realities, interpreting text (scripture) is unavoidable. Hermeneutics is employed to reproduce new meaning of text when new realities are faced.⁵³ Hermeneutics is also a solution when there is a tendency to

⁵² Nashr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Hermeneutika Inklusif: Mengatasi Problematika Bacaan dan Cara-cara Pentakwilan Atas Diskursus Keagamaan* (Jakarta: International Centre for Islam and Pluralism and Asia Foundation, 2004), 2.

⁵³ Interview with Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy, Surakarta, 3 September 2006.

disregard the richness of a text's meanings. George F McLean argues that the development of human scientific knowledge that is oriented to natural sciences has made the appreciation to the text is limited, including religious text.⁵⁴ Hermeneutics, therefore, is a tool of analysis that enables human beings to appreciate the richness of the text and produce its new meanings for new realities.

Conservatism: Factors of Emergence

I believe that Muhammadiyah has been experiencing two stages of conservatism. The first stage was begun when the Majelis Tarjih was founded in 1927 by K.H. Mas Mansur. Many believe that this point marked a new orientation of Muhammadiyah to be more ideological.⁵⁵ The second stage takes place in contemporary Indonesia when any restriction of expressions including religious was lifted and the contestation of various interpretations of Islam emerge. In this section, I will consider the factors that triggered the emergence of conservatism in Muhammadiyah in second context.

To understand conservatism in Muhammadiyah, it is important to briefly elaborate what is meant by conservatism in this context. According to Moeslim Abdurrahman, conservatism can be understood in two senses. The first is related to the political attitude that is resistant to globalization. The resistance is a result of the

⁵⁴ George F McLean, *Religion and the Relation between Civilizations: Lectures on Cooperation between Islamic and Christian Cultures in a Global Horizon* (Washington DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2000), especially introduction part.

⁵⁵ Interview with Haedar Nashir, in Yogyakarta, 2-3 October 2006.

nature of globalization that never compromises local identities and particularities. To a certain extent, the clash between the global and the local and feeling of being threatened from those localities has produced conservatism. This type of conservatism is not exclusive in one particular religion or community, since all religions will face the same problem when they are dealing with globalization. Secondly, conservatism can also be understood as a fundamentalist expression that totally rejects any kind of change. Conservatism can be seen as the forming and strengthening of exclusivism.⁵⁶ Abdurrahman sees Muhammadiyah's conservatism in this second sense. In this context, I agree with Abdurrahman's identification of conservatism in Muhammadiyah. Since this sense of conservatism embodies rejections to any kinds of change, a dialectical relation between different discourses is often difficult. On globalization issue, certain groups of Muhammadiyah will adopt an accommodative strategy, while others will choose confrontational strategy. Consequently, Muhammadiyah is trapped between two ideological orientations: the right and the left. The basic character of Muhammadiyah will, of course, reject those which are too right-oriented, since it is not the character of urban Islam. On the other hand, Muhammadiyah do not want to adopt left-oriented position which is more open to change and new ideas. Muhammadiyah has failed to synthesize these two ideological orientations, but at the same time defend itself, preserving its conservatism.

⁵⁶ Interview with Moeslim Abdurrahman

The rise of conflicting views of conservatism and progressivism, in Nashir's view, is a manifestation of a failure by Muhammadiyah in finding a common articulation that can compromise between purification and reformation.⁵⁷ A number of catalysing forces such as local, national and global issues turn this process into conservatism. However, there are three significant factors that contribute to the rise of conservatism in Muhammadiyah.

Firstly, political issues. The political factor can be understood in two senses. In one sense, the rise of conservatism in Muhammadiyah is a result of alliances between political Islam and puritan Islam.⁵⁸ After the collapse of the New Order, political Islam came to the fore whether in the forms of political parties or socio-religious organizations that campaigned for Islamization of the state. The intensification of political Islam forces, according to Haedar Nashir, has resulted in conservative religious thought. Nashir argues, political Islam and conservatism show a contradiction, namely while political Islam is conservative in term of religious thought, it is pragmatic in political agenda. Nashir's analysis was also justified by Zuly Qodir's argument that Islamic conservatism in Muhammadiyah is much motivated by political agenda rather than religious ones.⁵⁹ The ultimate goal of Islamic conservatism, argue Nashir and Qodir, is power. Both Nashir and Qodir believe that when power is achieved, conservatism shift into pragmatism.

⁵⁷ Interview with Haedar Nashir

⁵⁸ Interview with Haedar Nashir

⁵⁹ Interview with Zuly Qodir, in Yogyakarta, 20 September 2006.

In another sense, that the political factor is as a reaction to liberal and progressive tendencies in Muhammadiyah's Islamic thought. As has been indicated earlier, the existence of conservative and progressive ideologies creates a vicious circle. Progressivism as was represented by Tarjih Council in Amin Abdullah's term was in response to criticism of Muhammadiyah's stagnation in dealing with contemporary issues. Conversely, current conservatism is a response to that attempt at progressivism.

Moreover, Muhammadiyah has been the arena for several political Islam forces. They see that their ideological proximity with Muhammadiyah as an entry point to spread influences among Muhammadiyah members. PKS and Hizbut Tahrir are two important examples. In my view, one important factor in leading Muhammadiyah into more conservative thinking is the peneuation of Islamist ideas that are spread by Partai Keadilan Sejahtera ("PKS", or Prosperous Justice Party) and Hizbut Tahrir. In many cases, Muhammadiyah members who are politically affiliated to PKS will be more committed to the PKS rather than to Muhammadiyah. The implication for Muhammadiyah is the risk that they will spread PKS's (Tarbiyah) doctrines to Muhammadiyah's members⁶⁰ weakening Muhammadiyah.⁶¹ PKS penetration is mostly motivated by political forces in which it seeks to attract potential voters from Muhammadiyah. However, since PKS is both a political party

⁶⁰ Munir Mulkhan, "Sendang Ayu: Pergulatan Muhammadiyah di Kaki Bukit Barisan" (Sendang Ayu: Muhammadiyah's Struggle in Bukit Barisan Highland), *Suara Muhammadiyah*, No. 1, 1-16 January 2006.

⁶¹ Interview with Syafiq A Mughni.

and religious organization, in attracting its potential voters it offers a different religious doctrine from Muhammadiyah's and to certain extent also discredits Muhammadiyah's teaching.⁶² It is not surprising that in several Muhammadiyah's schools, the methods of Tarbiyah's teaching such as *daurah*, *liqa'*, and *usrah* are used as methods of education.⁶³ From my observation during Muhammadiyah's last congress in Malang, the penetration of Islamist ideas was also clear. At that congress, the idea that Muhammadiyah should support the formalization of Islamic law in Indonesia emerged.

Haedar Nashir argues that religious orientation that Muhammadiyah members had before joining Muhammadiyah plays an important role in shaping their ideological orientation after they have been involved in Muhammadiyah. There are Muhammadiyah members that have been patterned in puritan understanding of Islam, but they do not put a *tajdid* dimension in this understanding so as to become salafi or Wahhabi. On the contrary, there are also groups that are completely reform-oriented, but lose their fundamental thinking so that they tend to adopt a liberal understanding of Islam. There are also those who have been influenced by ideological Islamic movements that have strong political tendencies such as Ikhwanul Muslimin, and when they become Muhammadiyah's members they are not committed to Muhammadiyah's doctrine. Rather, Muhammadiyah is targeted as a field for the

⁶² Munir Mulkhan, "Sendang Ayu: Pergulatan Muhammadiyah di Kaki Bukit Barisan", see also, Zuly Qodir, "Etika Gerakan Islam di Indonesia" (The Ethics of Islamic Movements in Indonesia), *Suara Muhammadiyah*, Suara Muhammadiyah No. 19, 1-15 October 2006.

⁶³ Farid Setiawan, "Tiga Upaya Selamatkan Mu'allimin dan Mu'allimar" (Three Steps to Save Muhammadiyah's Schools), *Suara Muhammadiyah*, No. 7, 1-16 April 2006.

proliferation of their ideas. There are also Muhammadiyah members that give emphasis to shari'a aspects of Islam and do not accept any possibilities on the aspects of thought. There are those who see Islamic thought as identical to secularism and liberalism. When these tendencies grow in Muhammadiyah and there is no balance from deep and comprehensive Muhammadiyah's thought, Muhammadiyah's character will fade and shift into more radical.⁶⁴ However, Moeslim argues that the infiltration of Islamist groups is not the cause for the rise of conservatism in Muhammadiyah, but that the younger generation who live in a global environment that to certain groups in Muhammadiyah is regarded as the threat for Muhammadiyah's weakening identity.

Secondly, ideological issues. On an ideological level, Muhammadiyah is often referred as adopting Wahhabi's teachings. Amin Abdullah argues that as a result of its adoption of Wahhabi's teachings, Muhammadiyah loses its control mechanism on issues coming from the Middle East. Everything coming from the Middle East, Amin Abdullah argues, is unchallenged in Muhammadiyah. This assertion closely relates to the fact that in Muhammadiyah, the mastery of *kitab kuning* (classical Islamic discourse) is very weak. Wahhabi's influence on Muhammadiyah's theological stance has led Muhammadiyah to be accepting of Middle Eastern transmitted discourse. The adoption of the Wahabbi tendency is also one of the most important reasons why Muhammadiyah stands against traditions, especially those which are characterized as

⁶⁴ Haedar Nashir, "Karakter Muhammadiyah Sebagai Gerakan Islam (Bagian 4-Habis)" *Suara Muhammadiyah* No. 01

syncretic. According to M.A. al-Jabiri, there are two tendencies among Muslims in viewing tradition: the fundamentalist reading and the liberal reading. The fundamentalist read tradition with an ahistorical reading and understand tradition in one understanding: "...tradition that is locked inside tradition and absorbed by a tradition that it cannot in return include: it is tradition repeating itself."⁶⁵ The liberal reading, on the other hand, is influenced by European and Western style reading of tradition and therefore, it perceives tradition as Europe understands it.⁶⁶ In this respect, Muhammadiyah's reading of tradition can be paralleled with that of fundamentalists. In Amin Abdullah's view, this is one of the most important weakness of Muhammadiyah in which its approach towards tradition, which follows Wahabbism's teachings has also led Muhammadiyah to be less familiar with *turath* (heritage of classical Islam discourse).⁶⁷

Globalization also constitutes a threat for Muhammadiyah's identity. One of the most important points regarding globalization is that it is often equated with Westernization. That is, that to be global is to be as western as possible. This thinking and fear is common in Muhammadiyah and is evident in Muhammadiyah preachers' (*khatib*) sermons, whether in Friday sermons or other sermons. If we consider these sermons, the emphasis is given on how to face and destroy the enemies of Islam rather than sympathetically invite Muslims to accept a more open civilization. In

⁶⁵ M. A. al-Jabri, *Arab Islamic Philosophy: A Contemporary Critique* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 11-12.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 12.

⁶⁷ Interview with Amin Abdullah.

addition to emphasizing that Islam is the only true religion, the sermons spread fear among Muslims. This process has strengthened Muhammadiyah's identity and exclusivism and on this point the ideologization of Muhammadiyah takes place. Moeslim gives an example of the author of *Can Asians Think*.⁶⁸ In Moeslim's view, such a book was created from a feeling of being marginalized in the context of globalization. It could be said of Islam, *Can Muslims Think?* The feeling of being threatened and oppressed is inherent in most of Muslims, and in dealing with this situation, the strengthening of ideology and identity that is also accompanied by the process of exclusivism takes place.

Thirdly, education issues. Education plays a significant role in shaping one's orientation and tendency. This is not an exception in Muhammadiyah. In analysing the rise of conservatism in Muhammadiyah, education background can not be overlooked. In broad terms, conservatism in Muhammadiyah is mostly influenced by those are educated in the Middle East universities. The textual and scriptural tradition that they received during their training is applied in the Muhammadiyah context. This model of education that focuses on traditional and classical Islamic studies tends to ignore the interaction with other disciplines. In addition to education, Amin Abdullah, Hamim Ilyas, Syafiq Mughni and Zuly Qodir believe that post-educational interaction and reading greatly influences someone to be conservative or progressive.

⁶⁸ See Kishore Mahbubani, *Can Asians Think? Understanding the Divide Between East and West* (Berkeley, CA: Steerforth Press, 2002).

As Syafiq Mughni shows there is a different tendency between Muhammadiyah thought in Dahlan and post-Dahlan terms. Dahlan, in Syafiq's view interacts with a wide range of text, such as Abduh and Rida's work. However, whether Dahlan read Abdul Wahhab's work or not is not clear. In the post-Dahlan terms, Muhammadiyah leaders such as Sutan Mansur and Kiai Mas Mansur limited themselves on Middle Eastern-originated reading, especially Abdul Wahhab's works. They did not interact with Abduh or Rida's work. It is true, Syafiq argues, that at that time there were also works of Muslim intellectuals such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Ali Abd al-Raziq and Ameer Ali, but these were largely ignored. It was following Dahlan's term that the initial stage of Muhammadiyah conservatism occurred. In a contemporary context, while the source of knowledge is more extensive, the Middle Eastern alumni confine themselves on Middle Eastern transmitted sources. Conversely, other groups adopt a multidisciplinary approach and sources of information. In this circumstance, the likeliness of conservatism to rise is high.

CHAPTER IV

PROGRESSIVE ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN MUHAMMADIYAH

From the previous chapter, it is clear that historically, progressive and conservative Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah emerge from puritan doctrines. From a theoretical point of view, the conflicting ideas between these two groups are obvious. However, many people in Muhammadiyah see this tension differently. Some people favour saying that such a conflict is an over-generalization and more influenced by media coverage rather than facts,¹ while others view this dispute as an unintended situation that has to be faced by Muhammadiyah in the contemporary era.²

To demonstrate the conflicting ideas of conservative and progressive groups, an examination of two issues will be presented from the perspective of each group. This chapter will be devoted to examining progressives' thought by looking at the issues of: 1) religious pluralism; and 2) *Manhaj Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam* (The Methodology of Tarjih and the Proliferation of Islamic Thought).

Experts in Islamic thought believe that conservative and progressive Muslims differ on several issues. Omid Safi, who has extensively engaged with progressive Muslim projects, underlines four issues where progressives and conservatives are in dispute, namely engagement with tradition, social justice,

¹ Interview with Syamsul Hidayat, 3 September 2006 in Surakarta

² Interview with Haedar Nashir, 2-3 October 2006, in Yogyakarta, interview with Hamim Ilyas, 13 September 2006, in Yogyakarta.

gender justice and pluralism.³ Similarly, Mansoor Moaddel, while agreeing with Safi's thought, also extends his classifications to several concerns such as: gender equality and relationship between men and women, Islamic jurisprudence and its relationship to science, relation of Islam and politics and the proper form of government, civil society and the nature of western society, proper behaviour and life style, pluralism, and multiculturalism and liberalism.⁴ These issues are both internal and external. The issues of engagement with tradition, for instance, is related with internal affairs of Muslim intellectual heritage, while gender justice and pluralism, the relationship of Islamic jurisprudence and science, on the other hand, best describes the dialectic relationships of Islam with other traditions, i.e. Western.

At this point, Basheer M Nafi's categorization of evolving intellectual changes in Islamic thought of the nineteenth century into three categories is worth-taking into account. The first relates to the Muslim view of the primary Islamic texts, their role in addressing the challenges that are being faced by the Muslim world today and their responses to subsequent Islamic tradition. The secondly, relates to the prevalent Islamic intellectual modes and their connections to the living conditions of the Muslims; and third related to how Muslims define the external, namely western challenge and how to cope with these challenges.⁵

³ Omid Safi, "Introduction: The times they are a-changin' – A Muslim quest for justice, gender and pluralism", in Omid Safi (ed), *Progressive Muslim on Justice, Gender and Pluralism* (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 2003), 7-17.

⁴ See the introduction in Mansoor Moaddel and K. Talattof (eds), *Contemporary Debates in Islam: An Anthology of Modernist and Fundamentalist Thought* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), 1-21.

⁵ Basheer M Nafi, "The Rise of Islamic Reformist Thought and Its Challenge to Traditional Islam", in Suha Taji-Farouki and Basheer M Nafi (eds), *Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century* (London: I.B Tauris, 2004), 28-60.

Contemporary Muslim philosopher Hassan Hanafi, for example, has been involved in formulating Muslims' attitude toward traditions or classical heritage (*mawqifuna min al-turath al-qadim*) and present realities (*mawqifuna min al-waqi'*).⁶ His attempt to reformulate Muslims' attitude toward others has led him to create what he calls *al-ilm al-istighrab* (Occidentalism). Fazlur Rahman, on the other hand, proposed a double-movement theory which is described as interpreting Islamic tradition from present time to the Qur'anic time and then back to the present.⁷ It can be argued that contemporary Muslim scholars' thought such as Hassan Hanafi, Fazlur Rahman and Mohammed Arkoun strongly influences progressive Islamic thought on the issues to be discussed.

Religious Pluralism: A Theoretical Framework

In religious studies discourse, there is a well-known classification of world religions into revealed religions and unrevealed religions. Revealed religions are those which involve God's revelation in its formation and development, while unrevealed religions are often described as religions that result from human dialectics and thought. That is, revealed religions are revealed from God through His messengers; while unrevealed religions are humanly created religions. The three Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are classified as

⁶ This is only a small part of Hasan Hanafi's extensive project on Islamic reform. See Hassan Hanafi, *Al-Turath wa al-Tajdid: Mawqifuna min al-Turath al-Qadim* 4th Edition (Cairo: Al-Mu'assa al-Jam'iyya, 1991). See also *Muqadmma fi Ilm al-Istighrab* (Cairo: al-Mu'assasa al-Jam'iyya, 1992), 10.

⁷ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernism: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 7. See also Jon Armajani, *Dynamic Islam: Liberal Muslim Perspectives in a Transnational Age* (New York and Oxford: University Press of America, 2004), 82.

revealed religions, while Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, for example, fall under unrevealed religions classification. Although doctrinally Jews, Christians and Muslims are each revealed religions, at practical level, the relationship between the three has been problematic. In certain groups of Muslim society, for instance, there is a belief that Islam is revealed to complete previous religious traditions of Jews and Christianity.⁸ This belief is a good example of how conservative Muslims perceive other religious traditions, and in a broader context this attitude reflects conservative Muslims' rejection of religious pluralism. Some Muslims have artificial and shallow views of pluralism. Consequently, as Amir Husain notes, pluralism is regarded as an "anything goes ideology", moral relativism that attempts to unite religions into one single religion.⁹ Such a view of pluralism is not only inappropriate, but also potentially triggers exclusivist tendency among religious groups.

Definitions of pluralism are highly-contested by religious scholars. Being mindful of this, to begin the discussion of religious the pluralism discourse in Muhammadiyah, I will consider Diana L. Eck's theory as a model. In her *A New Religious America: How a Christian Country Now Becomes the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*, Eck identifies three important topics related to pluralism. First, she argues: "pluralism is not another word for diversity." It is

⁸ For extensive exchange between three Abrahamic religions, see B. Grose and Benjamin J. Hubbard (eds), *The Abraham Connection: A Jew, Christian, and Muslim in Dialogue: An Encounter Between Dr. David Gordis, Dr. George Grose and Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Cross Cultural Publications, Cross Roads Books, 1994). See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islamic-Christian Dialogue: Problems and Obstacles to be Pondered and Overcome," in *The Muslim World* (88: 3-4, July-October 1998), 218-237.

⁹ Amir Hussain, "Muslims, Pluralism, and Interfaith Dialogue", in Omid Safi, *Progressive Muslim on Gender and Pluralism* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003), 251-269.

more than diversity since it requires participative activities from different existing groups. Therefore, if a community consists of various groups of diverse background, religiously or ethnically, while at the same time there is no mutual involvement between them, pluralism will never exist. "Pluralism is not given but must be created."¹⁰ Secondly, the main goal that will be achieved by pluralism is not only 'toleration' to other religions or communities, but an attempt to achieve mutual-understandings. Basically, Eck argues, the language of toleration will prevent us from the type of involvement that focuses on discussion of what exists around us. Being tolerant to a neighbor who lacks environmental sensitivity, for instance, can easily be done by a member of a community. But, if the toleration comes from one side, this kind of toleration is far from the nature of genuine pluralism.¹¹ Thirdly, pluralism is not relativism. A genuine perspective on pluralism always keeps distant the ignorance of prominent differences that exist in various religious traditions. At the same time, it also is committed to involvement in those various differences in order to achieve a deeper feeling on mutual commitment.¹²

Religious Pluralism: Muhammadiyah's Experience

Diana Eck argues that pluralism is not a simple or single concept. It is not simple in that it is a concept that does not cease on a theoretical level, but also requires direct and practical social involvements. An understanding of pluralism

¹⁰ Diana L Eck, *A New Religious America: How a Christian Country Now Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 2001), 70.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

that is accompanied by direct social involvement will be very distinctive to that which has been undermined by prejudice. Pluralism is not a single context, since it requires 'interdependence' on other social contexts. Using Eck's pluralism as a model, it can be argued that in current Indonesian Islam the understanding of pluralism is merely differences and diversity that have not been accompanied by mutual-understanding and involvement. In religious studies discourse, there is a common agreement that pluralism is a typology that is often contrasted with exclusivism and inclusivism.¹³ Exclusivism is a position that belief in the truth of one religion, while other religions are false,¹⁴ while inclusivism argues that while there is a salvation path in other religious traditions, there is only one true religion.¹⁵ Exclusivism is the most suitable typology to describe Muhammadiyah's attitude toward religious pluralism. This tendency flourishes in Indonesian Islamic organizations, including Muhammadiyah, that can actually be expected to disseminate moderate Islam values. In the Muhammadiyah context, the appreciation on pluralism, in general, and to Christianity in particular, always obstructs the rigid and conservative religious understanding.

Zakiyuddin Baidhway observes that Muhammadiyah by other religious traditions, especially Christianity, is often seen as an anathema for religious pluralism. Baidhawy identifies that such a perception comes from two fundamental facts. The first relates to Muhammadiyah's history in which it was found in part as response to Christian missionary work in Indonesia that took

¹³ Yong Huang, "Religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue: beyond universalism and particularism", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religions*, (37: 1995), 127-144.

¹⁴ See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/2 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1956), 280-361.

¹⁵ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigation*, Vol. 5 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966).

place during Dutch colonialism in Indonesia, and the second is that Muhammadiyah's social activities were manifested in similar forms with those of Christians. Based on this reason, Baidhawiy argues that Christians feel that Muhammadiyah could be a potential threat for Christian missionary activities.¹⁶ Syafiq Mughni shares Baidhawiy's observation when he asserts that there is a general assumption among Christians to compare Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama regarding the social relationship with Christians. According to Mughni, Christians feel that they have had a lengthy and healthy relationship with NU, but not with Muhammadiyah. Responding this view, Mughni argues that Muhammadiyah does not have any problems in social interaction with Christians, so it does not see any importance to actively approach Christians. On the other hand, Muhammadiyah and Christian leaders generally have the same level of education, and therefore they have same awareness of their religiosity. From the feeling of awareness of their responsibility to religions, grows a willingness to invite people to convert. Missionary activities (*da'wa*) are more intensively carried out by Muhammadiyah than NU.¹⁷ Consequently, when Muhammadiyah's members live side by side with non-Muslims, i.e. Christians, they show emotional attitudes rather than rational ones. At this level, Ishomuddin, a pluralist-minded intellectual of Muhammadiyah University of Malang believes that it is difficult for Muhammadiyah's members to tolerate other religions as a result of their rigid understanding and implementation of the sacred text. Social considerations are left behind when they encounter other religious traditions. As a result, a positive

¹⁶ Interview with Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy, in Surakarta, 3 September 2006.

¹⁷ Interview with Syafiq A Mughni, in Sidoarjo, 24 September 2006.

stance on pluralism never exists, since there is a strong tendency to equate pluralism with the unity of religions.¹⁸

Zuly Qodir asserts that pluralism is an issue that will naturally emerge in a modern society. However, as a modern Islam movement the understanding of pluralism in Muhammadiyah is that all religions are the same and not in terms of pluralism as an appreciation of differences of religions or perspectives and theological position. As with other pluralists, Qodir warns that pluralism does not mean that all religions should be united into one religion. Rather, pluralism should be placed in a theological context of respect for other religions and their practices. For Christians, attending church is part of their way to God. For Muslims, practicing prayers five times daily is their way to God and ultimate truth.¹⁹ An appreciation of the uniqueness of religious traditions should be part of Muhammadiyah's position. Unfortunately, Qodir observes, Muhammadiyah's leaders show resistance and even rejection toward this position. Qodir advocates that Muhammadiyah should acknowledge that plurality is something that is given by God and that appreciating all kinds of differences and perspectives in religious life is a common need. The less people understand of other religions, the more prejudice they will be. Muhammadiyah should clearly state that pluralistic behaviour is part of religious life in Indonesia and that this enables a more sophisticated and humanistic religious reform.²⁰ By adopting pluralism, there are many benefits that Muhammadiyah can take.²¹

¹⁸ Email interview with Ishomuddin of Muhammadiyah University of Malang, 8 April 2007.

¹⁹ Interview with Zuly Qodir, in Yogyakarta, 20 September 2006.

²⁰ Interview with Zuly Qodir, in Yogyakarta, 20 September 2006.

²¹ Interview with Zakiyuddin Baidhaw, in Surakarta, 3 September 2006.

A sceptical view on Muhammadiyah in its relation with pluralism can also be seen from Alwi Shihab's study. According to Alwi Shihab, Muhammadiyah's formation was partly motivated by the penetration of Christian mission in Indonesia during the Dutch colonialism period. One of the fundamental objectives of Muhammadiyah was to slow down the wave of Christian missions at that time.²² However, Shihab's thesis has been challenged by several Muhammadiyah thinkers. Abdul Munir Mulkhan, for example, disagrees with such a view by arguing that the link to Muhammadiyah conception with Christianity mission activity in Indonesian during Dutch colonialism is historically weak. According to Mulkhan, rather than slowing down Christian missions, Dahlan cooperated with Christians to gain supports for Muhammadiyah's earlier social and economic units (*amal usaha*), especially health services. Mulkhan is convinced that if Dahlan was wary of Christians, the cooperation would never have taken place. Furthermore, Mulkhan argues that Muhammadiyah was resistant to Christian missions in the second period of its development, which Mulkhan classifies as the period of ideologization,²³ which is usually referred to as the Mas Mansur's period (1937-1949).²⁴ In this regard, Muhammadiyah's resistance to Christianity, in particular, or to religious pluralism discourse, in general, is began in this period.²⁵ Shihab's view is also implicitly challenged by Syafi'i Ma'arif when he argues that in his time, Dahlan was called "*Kristen Putih*" or White Christian. This description

²² Alwi Shihab, "The Muhammadiyah Movement and Its Controversy with Christian Mission in Indonesia," Ph.D Thesis, Temple University (1995).

²³ Interview with Munir Mulkhan, in Yogyakarta, 4 September 2006.

²⁴ Interview with Haedar Nashir, in Yogyakarta, 2-3 October 2006. See also Syafiq A. Mughni, *Nilai-Nilai Islam: Perumusan Ajaran Islam dan Upaya Aktualisasi* (Islamic Values: Formulation of Islamic Teachings and Actualization Attempts) (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001), 116-126.

²⁵ Interview with Haedar Nashir, in Yogyakarta, 2-3 October 2006.

meant that Dahlan was very familiar with many Christian figures at his time and it is this closeness which has invited misunderstanding among Muslims of his time.²⁶ According to Haedar Nashir, Muhammadiyah's resistance to religious pluralism is based on the fact that it does not have tolerant or pluralist theology as a result of its adoption to praxis theology. Furthermore, Nashir views that Muhammadiyah has not formulated its theology because of its reference to *fastabiqu al-khairat* (competing in doing good deeds), therefore Muhammadiyah does not prioritize theological matters when dealing with social plurality.²⁷

In the midst of many sceptical views on Muhammadiyah and its relation to religious pluralism, there are a small number of Muhammadiyah thinkers who see pluralism positively. This positive attitude has led them to promote pluralism in Muhammadiyah and suggest that Muhammadiyah should be more open in dealing with other religious traditions. Figures such as Syafi'i Ma'arif, Amin Abdullah, Munir Mulkhan, Moeslim Abdurrahman, Haedar Nashir, Syafiq A. Mughni, Muhadjir Effendy, Dawam Rahardjo²⁸, Hamim Ilyas, Yayah Khisbiyah and

²⁶ See, Syafi'i Ma'arif, "Foreword" in Alwi Shihab, *Membendung Arus: Respon Gerakan Muhammadiyah Terhadap Penetrasi Misi Kristenisasi di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1998), xiii-xiv. This book is an Indonesian translation of Alwi Shihab's dissertation at the Temple University, *The Muhammadiyah Movements and Its Controversy with Christian Mission in Indonesia* (1995). The closeness of Dahlan can also be seen from a fact that when he founded hospitals and provided free medical treatment for the poor, a Christian Dutch doctor made an offer to Dahlan to voluntarily work for the hospital. Dahlan accepted the offer and the doctor worked in Muhammadiyah-owned hospital voluntarily. It can be asserted that without a significant closeness with Christian community, such an event would never have taken place.

²⁷ Zuly Qodir, "Muhammadiyah dan Pluralisme Agama" (Muhammadiyah and Religious Pluralism) in Imron Nasri (ed), *Pluralisme dan Liberalisme: Pergolakan Pemikiran Anak Muda Muhammadiyah* (Pluralism and Liberalism: The Dynamics of Muhammadiyah Young Generation's Thought) (Yogyakarta: Citra Karsa Mandiri, 2005), 87-94.

²⁸ A special note should be given to Dawam Rahardjo. He had been an active member of Muhammadiyah central board during 1995-2000 and 2000-2005 periods in which he held the position as chairman of the economic council. Although he is widely known as an economist, Dawam is also important figure in Islamic thought in Indonesia. Currently, he is no longer part of

Syamsul Arifin are among senior intellectuals in Muhammadiyah who promote positive attitudes to other religious traditions. In younger generation rank, Zuly Qodir, Zakiyuddin Baidhway, Sukidi, Ahmad Fuad Fanani, Piet Khaidir and M Shofan are pluralist activists. Through their academic works and engagements in academic forums, these figures advocate progressive views regarding other religious traditions. Some of them have set up institutions and intellectual communities where the ideas of pluralism can be disseminated.

Between 1995-2000, the Tarjih Council under Amin Abdullah was involved in promoting inclusive views of Islam. Yayah Khisbiyah in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta set up a *Pusat Studi Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial* (PSB or Centre for the Study of Social and Cultural Changes), Moeslim Abdurrahman an important figure behind the formation of JIMM also founded al-Maun Foundation, Syafi'i Ma'arif founded Ma'arif Institute for Culture and Humanity, and Sukidi together with other Muhammadiyah young intellectuals set up *Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban* (The Centre for Religious and Civilization Studies). At the Muhammadiyah University of Malang Syamsul Arifin also pioneered the foundation of *Pusat Studi Islam dan Filsafat* (Centre for Islamic and Philosophical Studies) and in Surabaya, Syafiq A. Mughni also founded *Lembaga Pengkajian Agama dan Masyarakat* (LPAM, or Institute for the Study of Religion and Society). If those senior figures spread their ideas of pluralism through their foundations, the younger generation of pluralist Muhammadiyah are mostly active in JIMM and PSAP. In addition, they are or

Muhammadiyah central board as he was controversially dismissed from the board as a result of his support to Ahmadiyah community.

were also activists in other foundations that are regarded as supporters of pluralism such as International Centre for Islam and Pluralism, Jakarta (Ahmad Fuad Fanani), Dian/Interfidei or Interfaith Dialogue Institute, Yogyakarta (Zuly Qodir), and Centre for the Study of Social and Cultural Changes (Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy).

Regarding the nature of pluralism, A. Syafi'i Ma'arif argues that even in interpreting the same revelation by the same community, sharp differences will emerge. Pluralism gives everybody a chance to believe his/her religion as containing absolute truth, but the same chance is also given to other religious people to tightly embrace the same principle. The most important thing is that people should be tolerant to any kinds of differences in the world, whatever it is. "My faith tells that atheists are also God's creatures who should be respected. There is no valid worldly judgement that warrants diminishing atheists as long as they do not violate laws in a country. Therefore, diminishing other people without any legal processes is an inhumane deed that should be fought for."²⁹ Similarly, Muhadjir Effendy shows his pluralist attitude to challenge such a situation by directly involving himself in interfaith dialogue and interaction. He states regularly met members of other religions and respected their views and doing so "from my heart with sincerity." Muhadjir added that Christians and followers of other religions should not be concerned at any perceived shift in the philosophy of Muhammadiyah under the new leadership of chairman Din Syamsuddin. He

²⁹ Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, "Mutlak dalam Kenisbian," *Republika*, 29 December 2006.

expressed agreement with observers who have said the organization had become more conservative, but its values and interpretations remained open to debate.³⁰

Thematic Exegesis on Pluralism

Although religious pluralism is not a new issue, its introduction into the context of Islamic discourse can be considered new. Following the reorientation of Tarjih Council under Amin Abdullah (1995-2000), the council recognised the urgency of Muhammadiyah to respond to the discourse. This led to the publication of a book entitled *Tafsir Tematik tentang Hubungan Sosial Antarumat Beragama* (Thematic Exegesis on the Interreligious Social Relations). Although it is a product of Tarjih Council, it acknowledges that it is not meant to be *fatawa* that binds all Muhammadiyah members. According to an official version, Tarjih Council's works include two dimensions of religious fields: the first is religious practical guidance and the second is Islamic thought or discourse. While the first context relates to the practical level of religious lives and legally binds Muhammadiyah's members, the second dimension is a discourse, dialogue and theories that are intended to widen the horizon and sensitivity of thought and not to be obeyed as *fatawas*. Therefore, the second dimension does not have legal status as the first dimension does.³¹ In spite of that acknowledgment, this book still aroused heated debate and reaction from Muhammadiyah members.

³⁰ "Christians need not be concerned: Muhammadiyah rector", *The Jakarta Post*, 15 March 2006.

³¹ Majelis Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam PP Muhammadiyah, *Tafsir Tematik al-Qur'an Tentang Hubungan Sosial Antarumat Beragama* (Thematic Qur'anic Exegesis on Social Interaction of Interreligious People) (Yogyakarta: Pustaka SM, 2000), ix.

The debate was related to a sensitive topic raised in the *Tafsir Tematik*. The debate is related to both the content and methodology. Aware of the possibility to trigger further debate on a methodological level, before moving into the content, this book also gives background information on how it was composed. As its title indicates, this book employs thematic exegesis (*tafsir maudhu'i*) method. This method is usually understood in two patterns: the first pattern is selecting certain chapters of Qur'an to be completely interpreted. The complete interpretation of certain chapters is based on theoretical assumption that a chapter of Qur'an, while it discusses many topics, also constitutes a central topic in one thematic unity.³² Second pattern is in the form of collecting a number of verses from various chapters that discuss the same topic. The collected verses are then arranged and systematized and interpreted.³³ The Tarjih Council takes the second approach.³⁴ In this regard, this book is methodologically valid, since it is based on a scientifically accepted method in Qur'anic studies.

Generally, this book argues for the compatibility of Islam and religious pluralism. According to this book, the idea of religious pluralism is part of Islamic doctrines that can not be ignored. As its method involves the assessment of Qur'anic verses, after assessing a number of Qur'anic verses on the principles of religious pluralism in Qur'an, the book says:

The result is that there are a number of Qur'anic verses that can be understood as confirming the existence of religious pluralism and as a

³² Al-Shatibi, *al-Muwafaqat* (n.p.: Dar al-Fikr, 1431 H), III: 294-54, especially p. 250-1.

³³ See al-Farmawi, *Method of Tafsir Maudhu'i: Suatu Pengantar* (Thematic Exegesis: An Introduction), translated from Arabic to Indonesian by Suryan A. Jamrah (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 1996), 45-6.

³⁴ *Tafsir Tematik al-Qur'an*, ix-x.

consequence, in the context of diversity of religious traditions, al-Qur'an gives a guidance to compete in doing good deeds.³⁵

The acknowledgement of Qur'an of religious diversity as an integral phenomenon of a society reflects Islamic response to such a fact.³⁶ Islam does not deny plurality and diversity, rather it acknowledges and highly appreciates them. Muhammad is seen as one of a long chain of God's messengers who come with the same missions and messages. Muhammad, therefore, came to Arabs with the same "religion" and divine messages that Noah, Abraham and Moses brought.³⁷ According to Amin Abdullah, an understanding of the principles of pluralism in Islam should first be carried out by a comprehensive understanding of al-Qur'an. A comprehensive understanding of Qur'an, Abdullah argues, enables Muslims to find the fundamentals of Islamic teachings that relate to religious pluralism, as from its inception, Qur'an has dealt with various fundamental values that exist in various religious traditions as well as non-religious traditions that had been developed before the coming of Islam.³⁸ Abdullah concludes that Qur'an is aware and conscious of religious pluralism and to a certain extent, Qur'anic treatment of religious pluralism is liberal.³⁹ The awareness of Qur'an toward pluralism is also

³⁵ *Tafsir Tematik al-Qur'an*, p. 5.

³⁶ *Tafsir Tematik al-Qur'an*, p. 14.

³⁷ *Tafsir Tematik al-Qur'an*, p. 14.

³⁸ Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama: Normativitas atau Historisitas?* (Religious Studies: Normative or Historical) (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996), 63.

³⁹ M. Amin Abdullah, *Dinamika Islam Kultural: Pemetaan Atas Wacana Islam Kontemporer* (Cultural Islam Dynamics: Sketching Contemporary Religious Discourses) (Bandung: Mizan, 2000), 73.

manifested in the absence of Qur'anic obligation for human beings whether embrace or not (Q.S. 2: 256).⁴⁰

Pluralism and Social Interaction

Progressives in Muhammadiyah believe that in spite of the differences that exist among religious traditions in terms of doctrines and rituals, all religions teach the same messages. Qur'an uses *kalimah al-sawa'* (common platform or point of divergence) to describe the common platforms among religious traditions.⁴¹ This thought can also be found in the context of modern religious studies in which religions are usually analysed in term of general patterns and particular patterns. In Huston Smith's theory, the common platform is called "common vision"⁴² and Fritzhof Schuon it as "transcendent unity of religion".⁴³ "General pattern" refers to the basic meaning and function of religions that can be understood as ways to salvation and peace, while particular pattern is related to rituals of each religion. A Belief that religions are esoterically united has led Sukidi, one of the most prominent pluralist Muhammadiyah, to advise the convergence of religions.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ See Ahmad Najib Burhani, *Islam Dinamis: Menggugat Peran Agama, Membongkar Doktrin yang Membatu* (Dynamic Islam: Protesting Religion's Role, Deconstructing Stony Doctrines) (Jakarta: Penerbit Kompas, 2001), 6. See also Sukidi, "Dari Pluralisme Agama Menuju Konvergensi Agama" (From Religious Pluralism to Religious Convergence) *Kompas*, 17 October 1997.

⁴¹ See Qur'an Chapter Alu Imran: 64.

⁴² See Huston Smith, *Forgotten Truth: The Common Visions of the Worlds Religion* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1992)

⁴³ See Fritzhof Schuon, *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* 2nd Edition (Wheaton: The Philosophical Publishing House, 1984).

⁴⁴ Sukidi, "Dari Pluralisme Agama Menuju Konvergensi Agama" (From Religious Pluralism to Religious Convergence) *Kompas*, 17 October 1997.

Following Sayyed Hossein Nasr's theory, Amin Abdullah uses the analogy of languages to describe the equivalent position that religions occupy. On ontological-metaphysical level, humans can not deny the diversity of languages that exist in life. The fact that people have different languages can not be proposed as a justification to judge that one language is better or more perfect than others. Languages can be very different in terms of grammar or vocabularies, but in spite of these differences, there are the same "meanings" and "functions", namely as a communication medium among people. At this point, it is clear which part is universal dimension of language and which one is the particular dimension.⁴⁵ This situation can be exactly applied to religions, where no religion can claim that one religion is better or more perfect than others. In other words, humanity binds diverse and different religious tradition into a single bond of civility and humanity. In Syamsul Arifin's words, the humanitarian aspects of religions can not be reduced to certain spatial contexts, since those aspects are universal. The diversity that is built in human nature, sociologically, ethnically, religiously, or ideologically is a necessity for human beings. It is the task of religions, Arifin argues, to bind them in one bond of civility that is based on the principles of humanitarian equality, and therefore physical differences can not be presented as an excuse for the absence of equal communication.⁴⁶

As humanity is believed by progressive Muhammadiyah to be the core issue of all religions, their understanding of pluralism is also widened to

⁴⁵ M. Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama: Normativitas atau Historisitas*, p. 24-25.

⁴⁶ Syamsul Arifin, *Islam Indonesia: Sinergi Membangun Civil Islam dalam Bingkai Keadaban dan Demokrasi* (Indonesian Islam: A Synergy in Building Civil Islam in the Frame of Civility and Democracy) (Malang: UMM Press, 2003), 138.

appreciate other people's identity and the right to exist. Moeslim Abdurrahman argues that religious diversity in the context of pluralism is appreciating diversity of individuals or groups.⁴⁷ As pluralism is an undeniable fact of human life, Muhammadiyah should not view it as a new and strange phenomenon. Such assumption of pluralism, according to Zuly Qodir, is the root cause of Muhammadiyah's resistance. Another cause that leads Muhammadiyah to be wary of religious pluralism is that it is often seen in terms of rigid binary opposition. Pluralism can not be viewed in term of binary oppositions: permitted-not permitted, accepted or rejected.⁴⁸ Rather, pluralism is a willingness to live together with various people of different backgrounds. The core issue in pluralism is living together harmoniously with people from various backgrounds and identities, Suyoto points out.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Suyoto argues that as far as living harmoniously is concerned, the Prophet Muhammad has exemplified this. The acknowledgment of other religious community in the context of Muslim society under Prophet is further formulated in the concept of *kafr dzimmi* (protected non-believers) and *kafr harb* (non-believers who do not obey Islamic rule and should be punished).⁵⁰

Similarly, Ahmad Fuad Fanani argues that acknowledgement of religious diversity in a social community emphasises inclusiveness among people who seek

⁴⁷ "Muslim Abdurrahman, Tidak Pernah Berhenti Berpikir Tentang Indonesia," (Muslim Abdurrahman, Never Ceases Thinking on Indonesia) in *Kalimatun Sawa* Vol. 2 (Surakarta: Pusat Studi Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial). The text is also available online: <http://www.psbps.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=52&Itemid=74>

⁴⁸ Interview with Zuly Qodir, in Yogyakarta, 20 September 2006.

⁴⁹ Interview with Suyoto, in Gresik-East Java, 6 September 2006.

⁵⁰ *Kafr dzimmi* or protected non-believers are non-Muslims who are protected by Islamic law as a reward of their obedience to Islamic law, not as Muslims but as citizens. While *kafr harbi* is a term for non Muslim who live in a Islamic state, but show their resistance to obey Islamic law that also serves as state's law.

to maintain their own religion, while social reality proves that society is culturally and religiously heterogeneous. Inclusiveness is important as a path toward the growing seeds of sensitivity of various unique possibilities for human beings in relation to their effort to seek spiritual and moral welfare. Pluralism as a motivating factor in conducting cooperation and openness has been stated by God in Chapter al-Hujurat: 13-14.⁵¹ According to Fanani, by analysing this verse it is clear that plurality is “God’s policy” in order to make human beings know and cooperate with each other.⁵² Zakiyuddin Baidhaw, a presidium member of JIMM, classifies pluralism into sociological pluralism and theological pluralism. By sociological pluralism, Zakiyuddin means that sociologically people are different, in a context where people from various religious, ethnic, language background live side by side in one social community. According to Baidhaw, while conservatives accept sociological plurality, they do not accept it in terms of theology and philosophy. In a conservative’s view, there is no normative plurality, since there is only one norm. Baidhaw believes that whether sociological or theological, pluralism is a social fact. Baidhaw warns, that there are attempts to understand pluralism only in terms of religious pluralism, and this is a deliberate attempt to create a negative image on other groups and is part of the conservative’s strategy. Regarding Tarjih Council’s attempts, Baidhaw asserts:

⁵¹ Verse 13 says: “O, mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he is who) the most righteous to you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).” Verse 14: “The desert Arabs say, ‘We believe.’ Say, ‘Ye have no faith; but ye only say, ‘We have submitted our wills to God, for not yet has Faith entered your hearts. But if ye obey God and His Apostle, He will not belittle aught of your deeds: for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

⁵² Ahmad Fuad Fanani, *Pluralism dan Kemerdekaan Beragama*, <http://islamlib.com/id/index.php?page=article&id=883>

“I strongly support what Tarjih Council has done regarding religious pluralism, namely the publication of its book on religious pluralism.”⁵³

This discussion underlines that according to progressives, at normative level, the compatibility of Islam and pluralism is well-established. However, on a practical level the problem of pluralism becomes very complicated. According to Sukidi one of the biggest problems of religious life in Indonesia is that people’s faith is highly supervised and ordered by an “unholy alliance” between the state and exclusive-minded clerics. Both have been acting as “the judge of truth” on people’s faith who are suspected of being “infidel.” Faith has to be unified and in accordance with the will of “truth regime.” Tolerance and religious pluralism are one of the most important Qur’an’s messages.⁵⁴

The progressives point to the narrow-mindedness as a core reason for negative attitudes toward religious pluralism. According to Amin Abdullah, this is due to the influence of partial understanding of Islamic doctrines, the prophetic moral of Islam that is universal, inclusive and *hanif* was reduced into particular, exclusive and ahistorical. When this understanding is brought to the context of religious pluralism, the result is the growing exclusivism and the loss of appreciation for other religious traditions.⁵⁵

Syafiq A Mughni suggests that the conservatives hold feeling of mistrust towards progressives. There is also an over-simplification that Islamic thought which does not explicitly support shari’a, is synonymous with that of pluralism and liberalism. In fact, there are complex variants. There are groups that believe

⁵³ Interview with Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy, in Surakarta, 3 September 2006.

⁵⁴ Sukidi, “Iman untuk Toleransi,” <http://islamlib.com/id/index.php?page=article&id=1059>.

⁵⁵ M. Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama*, p. 66.

that all religions are true and on the path to salvation, but in politics, they believe that it is only Islam that can guarantee the welfare of a state. In other words, they are very open in terms of religious diversity, but in terms of law they are very rigid. Other groups are narrow-minded in term of religious diversity, while they are very open in term of law. "We have to be convinced that Islam is the path to salvation, but Muhammadiyah has to appreciate the existence and rights of other religious tradition," Syafiq advised.⁵⁶

At the epistemological level, progressives in Muhammadiyah see that it is not significant to contradict Islam and pluralism. Progressive also believe that acknowledgement and a positive approach to pluralism, should not only be exercised on a theoretical level, but also on a practical level. Therefore, an important question regarding this is, what are the practical forms and actual implementation of that religious toleration? Should Muslims tolerate other religious traditions and practices such as wishing Christmas for Christians? In this relation, Moeslim Abdurrahman argues that wishing merry Christmas to fellow Christians is not a theological act, rather it reflects social values that should be presented by Muslims as a consequence of their interaction with other social entities.⁵⁷ Similarly, Syafiq Mughni also argues that wishing Christmas is not part of theological belief. Similarly, Mughni points out that wishing merry Christmas is a social consequence that should be embraced by member of a plural society,

⁵⁶ Interview with Syafiq A Mughni, in Sidoarjo, 24 September 2006.

⁵⁷ Interview with Moeslim Abdurrahman, in Jakarta, 28 September 2006.

not only Muhammadiyah, but also other Muslims as well as non-Muslim communities.⁵⁸

The intolerance of other religious traditions has the potential to widen social disparities between religions. According to Moeslim Abdurrahman, religions have to be the basis for social solidarity and collective identity. Religion should also be doctrinal base to encourage the progress and can be guide for modern life. But, in a social dynamic that radically creates social fragmentations, such as the ignorance of certain social groups from the process of development, the advancement of science and technology and the formation of contemporary political power centres, religious messages should be returned to its nature as the place for human transcendence, whether to correct individual's spirituality or correct social structural institutions that threaten solidarity and common salvation. Therefore, social activities such as interreligious dialogue should be returned as religious people's projects, so it can be part of cultural instrument of peace.⁵⁹ M. Shofan, a former lecturer at Muhammadiyah University of Gresik, East Java, in one of his article on religious pluralism writes:

As a Muslim, let me wish a merry Christmas to my fellow Christians. I am fully aware of the consequence of my statement. To certain groups of Muslims, this statement will be seen as an inconsistency in my religiosity. But let us leave it, I believe that all people have freedom to interpret religion that they adopt. Islam that I adopt is not an anti-pluralism Islam. Islam that I believe is an Islam that is appreciative and accommodative to various ethnicity, culture, race, as well as religions.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Interview with Syafiq A Mughni, in Sidoarjo, 24 September 2006.

⁵⁹ Moeslim Abdurrahman, *Islam Sebagai Kritik Sosial* (Islam as Social Critique) (Jakarta: Penerbit Erlangga, 2003), 77.

⁶⁰ M. Shofan, "Nata! dan Pluralisme Agama" (Christmas Day and Religious Pluralism), *Surya*, 23 December 2006. This article has lead to the lecturer being dismissed from the university. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

In a different context, in December 2006 Din Syamsuddin, chairman of Muhammadiyah, held an interreligious meeting with religious leaders in Indonesia in Muhammadiyah headquarters, Jakarta. At that meeting, one of Christian leaders complained as to the difficulty to find suitable places for Christmas celebrations. Din's response was humane and religious, "Except mosques, all Muhammadiyah-owned facilities can be borrowed for Christmas needs." With a bit resolution, Din added, "This is Muhammadiyah Chairman's order to all Muhammadiyah members."⁶¹

To some this was seen as a progressive act, particularly after having been criticised as a supporter of conservative Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah. However, after he made his offer to Christians, he was subject to protests and complaints from colleagues and even Muhammadiyah's members in regional level. Recording this situation, Guntur Romli, an activist of JIL writes: "It is regrettable, in facing these protests and challenges Din's good intention not only decreased, but rather disappeared. In fact, if he is truly aware that his offer will spread the seeds of virtue and tolerance, he does not need to easily surrender."⁶² Guntur Romli questions why Din should retread, if he believes that building an authoritative, independent and moderate religious institution needs a strong commitment.

Guntur is an observer who sees how Din's positive intention toward religious pluralism and toleration can lead to a more tolerant Muhammadiyah.

⁶¹ *Jawa Pos*, 22 December 2006.

⁶² M. Guntur Romli, "Ujian Buat Din" (A Test for Din), <http://islamlib.com/id/index.php?page=article&id=959>

Many insiders also share the same view.⁶³ Din's approach is often seen as inconsistent. It is interesting, therefore, that while the progressives' attitude toward religious pluralism is clear, it is difficult to identify Din Syamsuddin's attitude. On many occasions, Din showed a pluralist attitude, while in others, he has acted in a conservative way. Regarding religious pluralism, Din argues that sociologically pluralism that is based on religion, culture and language is a necessity. From an Islamic perspective, pluralism is a *sunnatullah* (natural law) that must be experienced and that its development should be supported on the basis of *ta'aruf*, which is mutual-understanding, mutual-appreciation and cooperation. Therefore, in al-Qur'an, Islam guarantees the freedom to have a religion or not.⁶⁴

The most important issue for Muhammadiyah regarding tolerance is the moderate way that Muhammadiyah has and is willing to perform dialogue and communication with other religious people.⁶⁵ Haedar Nashir, as quoted by Zuly Qodir, that Muhammadiyah defines tolerance as a moderate religious attitude that appreciates other religious people and faiths and that tolerance is not meant to go beyond any particular religions' faith border.⁶⁶ It would be more significant for organizations like Muhammadiyah to openly oppose discriminatory treatment not only against Christians, but non-conformist Muslim groups like, the Ahmadi.⁶⁷ One attitude which hinder interreligious dialogue is theological autocracy and

⁶³ See, for example, a prolonged discussion at Muhammadiyah online discussion group. Although many members challenge Din's intention, the supporters are also extensive enough.

⁶⁴ "MUI Diimbau Cabut Fatwa Haram Pluralisme," *Suara Merdeka*, 3 August 2005.

⁶⁵ Zuly Qodir, *Syariah Demokratik: Pemberlakuan Syari'ah Islam di Indonesia* (Democratic Shari'a: The Implementation of Islamic Shari'a in Indoensia (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar), 157.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ "Christmas and Muhammadiyah," *The Jakarta Post*, Saturday, December 24, 2005

arrogance which assumes the ones own religion is the ultimate truth. This attitude will close any path to the truth and the self-enrichment with new truth. According to Burhani, it is highly possible that in its progress, a religion will deviate from its sincerity and truth. Therefore, Burhani concludes, people may regard their own faith as absolute, but this attitude should also be accompanied by an acknowledgement of other people that also believe in the absoluteness of their faith.⁶⁸

The above discussion demonstrates that progressive Muhammadiyah activists see pluralism as part of human being reality. They see Islam as compatible with the idea of pluralism. There are many misunderstandings by pluralism opponents who equate the concept with the unity of religions. Progressives believe that viewing pluralism as the unity of religions is misleading. Rather, they believe in the ultimate truth and the similarity of the religious messages and esoteric visions that all world religions have. The acknowledgement of other religious traditions' existence does not deter at theological or rhetoric level, but it should be extended to social and practical levels. However, in conducting interaction with other religious traditions' people, there should be distinction between theological aspects and social aspects. The progressives believe that as long as interfaith dialogue and relationship does not confuse theological doctrines and uniqueness of each participating religion, pluralism is not a threat. Theological considerations should not be prioritized in a social context. For example, progressives argue that wishing Merry Christmas to

⁶⁸ Ahmad Najib Burhani, *Islam Dinamis: Menggugat Peran Agama, Membongkar Doktrin yang Membatu* (Dynamic Islam: Protesting Religion's Role Deconstructing Stony Doctrines) (Jakarta: Kompas, 2001), 14-15.

Christians is part of social ethics and not theological. In this context, wishing other people well for their important events cannot be seen as causing Muslims to betray or ruin their faith.

Manhaj Tarjih and PPI

The production of new ideas in Islamic thought cannot be separated from the construction of methodology in understanding various disciplines of Islamic studies. The building of a method in Islamic intellectual history has been enormous and has allowed Muslim intellectuals to produce great works in their respective fields. In Islamic jurisprudence principles or the philosophy of Islamic law (*ushul al-fiqh*), Imam Shafi'i through his *al-Umm* and *al-Sulam* has built a set of methodological principles in understanding texts and creating new law in accordance with time and space changes. In the study of Islamic theology and religious studies, al-Sahraṣṭānī wrote *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*; while in social sciences, Ibn Khaldūn has left his methodological magnum opus of *al-Muqaddimah*. The existence of a methodological framework also allows Muslims to adjust Islamic teachings with contemporary situations. In this regard, understanding Islamic basic teachings and relating them according to contemporary circumstances should be proceeded with the mastery of methodologies. The role that methodologies play in constructing new Islamic thought is very important.

Consistent with this historical precedence, the creation of *Manhaj Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam* (The Method of Tarjih and the Proliferation

of Islamic Thought, hereafter *Manhaj*) in Muhammadiyah cannot be separated from an awareness of the need for a methodological system that Muhammadiyah can refer to as far as Islamic thought dissemination and its relation with the contemporary situation is concerned. It should be noted in the first instance that the method is aimed at refreshing and reconstructing Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah which has been criticised as being stagnant. The Tarjih Council produced two methods, namely *manhaj ijtiḥad hukum* or the method of law deduction (chapter 2) and *manhaj pengembangan pemikiran Islam* or method of Islamic thought proliferation (chapter 4). The first relates to the production of practical religious guidance, while the second relates to the construction of Islamic thought in a general sense. These two methods can not be separated and should be seen as complementary. Regarding Islamic law and fatawa production, although Muhammadiyah has a methodological set that can be employed, the issuance of fatawa is usually carried out in correspondence with the emergence of new issues that do not have clear status in Islamic law whether because of unavailability of explicit textual reference or the absence of historical precedence. Consequently, fatawa are mostly issued in response to individual cases.⁶⁹ This constitutes a problem in Islamic thought dissemination in Muhammadiyah. A second problem, which is the strong domination of *bayani* (textual) approach in Muhammadiyah, has led to the *fiqh*-minded tendency that to certain extent has

⁶⁹ When such a case occurs, Muhammadiyah will refer to an established method in Islamic law, namely using the techniques of *ijma'* (consensus), *qiyas* (analogy), *mashalih al-mursalah* (deduction a law that is most beneficial for public) and 'urf (customary law). See Keputusan Munas Tarjih XXV tentang Manhaj Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam, p. 6.

ignored a more comprehensive approach in understanding law and producing new fatawas.⁷⁰

On the other hand, it is believed that disseminating Islamic thought cannot be done by using a case by case approach, but should be carried out through an established methodological principle. In addition, it should also include comprehensive approaches that not only Islamic thought, but also social sciences and humanities.⁷¹ In the preface of this methodology, it is stated: “*Manhaj Pemikiran Islam* (Islamic thought method) is a methodological framework in formulating the problems in Islamic thought and its solving procedures; in which basic assumptions, principles of development, methodology and its operation are included.”⁷² The *manhaj* also mentions that as an Islamic movement that is characterized by its socio-cultural features, Muhammadiyah is part of historical progress. Muhammadiyah believes that history is always accompanied by the emergence of new problems and toward those newly-emerged problems Islam has provided normative preferences that can be presented to respond to them, on the other hand. It is the orientation to these two divine dimensions that distinguish Muhammadiyah from any other socio-cultural Islamic movement, whether in terms of problem formulation, explanation, or in composing its operational

⁷⁰ See Muhammad Azhar and Hamim Ilyas (ed), Editor's Preface in *Pengembangan Pemikiran Keagamaan di Muhammadiyah: Antara Purifikasi dan Dinamisasi* (The Proliferation of Religious Thought in Muhammadiyah: Between Purification and Dinamization) (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar and LPPI, 2000), iii-vi. See also M. Amin Abdullah, "Preface" in Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy and Muthoharun Jinnat (eds), *Agama dan Pluralitas Budaya Lokal* (Religion and the Plurality of Local Cultures) (Surakarta: Pusat Studi Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial, 2002), xiii-xxiii.

⁷¹ Interview with Amin Abdullah, in Yogyakarta, 12-13 September 2006.

⁷² PP Muhammadiyah Majelis Tarjih, *Manhaj Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam*, Chapter I, Introduction.

framework.⁷³ In a similar way, Muhammad Azhar, a member of Tarjih Council 2005-2010, sees the importance of Tarjih Council to reformulate a led Muhammadiyah's worldview that differentiates Muhammadiyah from other Islamic movements. In 1995-2000 Tarjih Council conclude: "It is this orientation that necessitates Muhammadiyah to produce thought, review and reconstruct its method."⁷⁴

In order to achieve those objectives, the method urged a harmonious relationship between text and context in order to produce (new) truth. Theoretically speaking, in Islamic discourse there are two kinds of truth, namely *ikhbari* and *nazhari*. The first refers to the revelation that comes from God, which is sacred and is not the object of studies in Islamic thought. The second is a product of dialectical processes of human reasoning (*ta'aqulli*). All sacred texts should be interpreted in accordance to the surrounding environment, including authors, readers, and audiences. The dialectical relation between these three contexts is known as the hermeneutical circle which means undeterred attempts to interpret the sacred texts (*al-nushush al-mutanahiyah*). It is also guided by sustainable changes in contemporary realities, at individual or social levels. In this context, new readings and understandings of text are a necessity.⁷⁵ The reading of the sacred texts, according to *Manhaj*, is a productive reading and understanding (*al-qira'ah al-muntijah*) and not a repetitive and narrative reading and understanding (*al-qira'ah al-mutakarirrah*).⁷⁶ In Kuntowijoyo's views, Qur'anic

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Manhaj Tarjih*, p. 12.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

values can not be textually applied in the context of recent society, since there is a socio-historical distance between social context in which Qur'an was revealed (Arab) and current social context. "...At that time (when the Qur'an was revealed, Arab society was pre-industrial, tribal and homogenous, while contemporary society is industrial and even post-industrial, civil, and heterogeneous". Consequently, he concludes, a new method that will enable application of Islamic doctrines and teaching in the current situation is inevitably required. Kuntowijoyo calls the method *strukturalisme transendental* (transcendental structuralism).⁷⁷

The above context outlines the fundamental reasons behind the construction of a new method in Muhammadiyah's Islamic thought. Suyoto, an important figure in the development of this method, argues that it is a result of increasing public awareness in Muhammadiyah. When Muhammadiyah formulated the concept of *masyarakat utama* (leading society) many issues emerged, such as *tauhid sosial* (social theology)⁷⁸ and *zakat profesi*⁷⁹ (professional almsgiving) which could not have coped with Tarjih's earlier

⁷⁷ See Kuntowijoyo, *Muslim Tanpa Masjid: Esai-Esai Agama, Budaya, dan Politik dalam Bingkai Strukturalisme Transendental* (Muslims Without Mosques: Essays on Religion, Culture, and Politics in the Framework of Transcendental Structuralism) (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), especially Introduction part, 9-32.

⁷⁸ For detail discussion on social theology, see M. Amin Rais, *Tauhid Sosial: Formula Menggempur Kesenjangan Umat* (Social Theology: A Formula for Combating Ummah's Disparities) (Bandung: Mizan, 1998).

⁷⁹ Professional almsgiving is Amien Rais' brain-child that suggests a reformulation of almsgiving law in Islam. In classical understanding of almsgiving, it applies to people who have certain amount of property, whether in the form money, gold or others. The basic law says that for farmers who depend on rain to irrigate their agricultural crops (*sawah tadah hujan*) are obliged to pay 20 percent of their harvest. While for those who depend on irrigation system, have to pay 5 percent from its total harvest. This seems to Amien Rais as an inequality since other professions are not clearly stated, whilst there are many modern white-collar professions earning more in than farmers. Based on this reason, Amien Rais proposed almsgiving obligations for those white-collar professionals to pay up to 20 per cent for their income in a year. For a detailed account on this subject, see M Amien Rais, *Cakrawala Islam: Antara Cita dan Fakta* (The Horizon of Islam: Between Images and Facts) (Bandung: Mizan, 1987).

methodology which emphasized on *tarjih*⁸⁰ aspect, that is part of *bayani* (textual) method.⁸¹ *Tarjihi* approach places two or more textual legal sources in a comparative position. The result of this comparison is that there will be varying degree of validity of text according to Islamic law. This binary opposition cannot be applied in every case. Suyoto argues that not all thought can be approached with a binary opposition pattern, where explanatory and elaborative methods are more appropriate. This prevents other traditions of *burhani* and *irfani* to be considered. When dealing with issues such as social alienation and modern religiosity, the construction of new method is a necessity. Suyoto points out that the label “*Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam*” as new identity for Tarjih Council, can be traced to this story. Some Muhammadiyah groups viewed this label as inappropriate given that PPI is seen as less Islamic than Tarjih. Furthermore, it is also seen as the gate for liberal Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah.⁸²

In contrast, Suyoto continues, for those who have an elevated awareness of public awareness, this need can not be ignored. He gives the example of Asymuni Abdurrahman (the chairman of Tarjih Council before Amin Abdullah) as being well-versed in discussing the dissemination of Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah, and possessing a heightened awareness of social issues. In Muhammadiyah’s case, Suyoto recognizes that raising social consciousness is difficult, since information dissemination in Muhammadiyah is very complicated. PPI as new label for Tarjih

⁸⁰ Literally speaking, the Tarjih Council’s basic work was deducting Islamic law from available text. Technically, the texts were compared in order to get the most valid one. This activity of comparison is known as *tarjih*.

⁸¹ Bayani approach is a philosophical study on the system of knowledge structure that positions text (revelation) as an absolute truth.

⁸² Email interview with Wawan Gunawan Abdul Wahid, member of Tarjih Council, 2005-2010, 26 March 2007.

council necessitates Muhammadiyah to formulate the methodology of Islamic thought proliferation. In this context, it is understandable that Amin Abdullah as chairman of Tarjih Council during 1995-2000 period, consciously adopted al-Jabiri's method of Islamic thought.⁸³ The adoption of al-Jabiri's method was enriched with new innovation known as "circular movement." This meant that Muhammadiyah must be flexible in adopting social approaches and, attentive to spiritual aspects when solving its problems. Regarding this new method and its adoption to al-Jabiri's theories, Suyoto argues: "I am inclined to say that Muhammadiyah's *Manhaj* is more than al-Jabiri's."⁸⁴ Amin Abdullah acknowledges that the adoption of al-Jabiri's methods was not meant to be the dominating method, but rather is adopted as a framework which is later developed in the context of Muhammadiyah's experiences.⁸⁵

Wawan Gunawan, a member of the current Tarjih Council, argues that the council is one of the most strategic vehicles that Muhammadiyah has that can spread new ideas on a number of its key issues, especially in the field of socio-religious fatawas. But, there are several factors that hinder the effectiveness of this council. There are many socio-religious issues that are dismissed by the Tarjih,

⁸³ Mohammed Abed al-Jabiri is a contemporary Muslim thinker who is well-known for his criticism of Islamic epistemology. He was born in Figuig, Southeast Morocco, on 27 December 1935, when Morocco was under French and Spain colonies. He was educated in philosophy in *Jami'ah Muhammad al-Khamis* (University of Muhammad V) in Rabbat. He has been extensively engaged with Islam epistemological reform projects and has produced numerous works on the subject. Among al-Jabiri's works are: *Nahnu wa al-Turath: Qira'at Mu'ashirah li Turathina al-Falasafy* (1980, We and Our Heritage: Contemporary Reading on Our Philosophical Heritage), *Al-Kithab al-'Arabiyy al-Mu'ashir: Dirasa Tahliliyya Naqdiyya* (1982, Contemporary Arabic Thought: Analytical Critical Studies), *Takwin al-'Aql al-'Araby* (1984, The Formation of Arab Reason), *Bunya al-'Aql al-'Araby* (1986, The Construction of Arab Reason), *Muqaddima fi Naqdi al-'Aql al-'Araby* (1990, Introduction into the Critique of Arab Reason) and *Naqd al-'Aql al-'Araby* (1993, Critique of Arab Reason).

⁸⁴ Interview with Suyoto, in Gresik, East Java, 6 September 2006.

⁸⁵ Interview with M. Amin Abduliah, in Yogyakarta, 12-13 September 2006.

such as human trafficking, natural disasters, HIV/AIDS, pornography and the like. However, compared to previous terms, current Tarjih Council is much more productive in term of the books that it has produced and the guidance that it has.⁸⁶ During Amin Abdullah's term, the council was more involved in producing Islamic discourse and building epistemological basis. What Amin Abdullah has achieved, in terms of Manhaj Tarjih, is maintained except the *irfani* approach, which is still debated in Muhammadiyah. Wawan points out that Amin Abdullah has not finished in giving definitions and boundaries on the *irfani* epistemology.

The method of proliferation of Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah is developed on several principles. Firstly, *al-mura'ah* (conservation) principle attempts to preserve basic values of revelations in order to resolve newly-emerged problems.⁸⁷ The preservation can be carried out through purification of Islamic teachings. The scope of preservation is in the field of *aqidah* (faith) and *ibadah mahdhah* (specific worshipping).⁸⁸ Secondly, *al-tahdithi* (innovation) principle attempts to complete Islamic teachings for Muslim society in accordance with its social development. The completion is undergone by approaches of reactualization, reinterpretation and revitalization of Islamic teachings. Thirdly, *al-ibtikari* (creation) principle is a principle of creating formulation of Islamic thought in creative and constructive ways in response to actual issues. The

⁸⁶ Email interview with Wawan Gunawan, 26 March 2007.

⁸⁷ In the discourse of Islamic jurisprudence principles, conservation principle is described as: *al-muhafadzatu 'ala al-'qadim al-shalih wa ma'a al-akhdlu al-jadid al-ashlah* (preserving older good values and at the same instance adopting new and better values).

⁸⁸ In the discourse of Islamic law, *ibadah* or activity of worshipping is divided into two types: specific and general. Specific worshipping is activities of worshipping that has been specifically mentioned in Qur'an and Sunna, such as five times prayers, paying almsgiving, and pilgrimage. While general worshipping means any good deeds that are believed will be rewarded by God, such as helping other people, helping poor, etc. For a detailed account on *ibadah*, see Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, *Himpunan Putusan Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, p. 276.

creation is carried out by accepting values from outside of Islam or by selectively recognising outside values and elements.⁸⁹

As has been stated earlier, Muhammadiyah's reasoning has been enormously influenced by *bayani* (textual) approach. Therefore, the method introduces the trilogy of *bayani*, *burhani* and *irfani*. By this method the *bayani* (textual) approach should be accompanied by *burhani* (rational approach) and *irfani* (gnostic, spiritual). These three approaches are not independent of each other. Rather, they are in a relation that Amin Abdullah calls circular-dialectical and critical-communicative.⁹⁰ *Bayani* is a philosophical study on the system of knowledge structure that positions text (revelation) as an absolute truth.⁹¹ *Bayani* is usually employed in two contexts. First is to understand and analyse texts or acquire meanings of the texts. In other words, it is used to extract literal meaning of the text. Second, it is also used to deduce Islamic law from religious texts (*al-nushush al-diniyya*) and, especially al-Qur'an.⁹² This approach is popular among jurists, theologians and *ushuliyyin* (Muslim scholars who devote themselves to the study of principles of Islamic jurisprudence). This approach's emphasis is on the literal meaning of religious texts and needs instruments in the forms of linguistic theories and their *uslub* (styles).

⁸⁹ *Manhaj Tarjih*, p. 13.

⁹⁰ Amin Abdullah, "Preface" in Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy and Muthoharun Jinnah (eds), *Agama dan Pluralitas Budaya Lokal* (Religion and the Plurality of Local Cultures) (Surakarta: Pusat Studi Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial, 2002), xxi.

⁹¹ Muhammad Abed al-Jabiri, *Bunyah al-Aql al-Arabi* (The Construction of Arab Reason), (Beirut: Markaz al-Tsaqafiy al-Arabi, 1993), 383.

⁹² See M. Amin Abdullah, "Preface" in Zakiyuddin Baidhawiy and Muthoharun Jinnah (eds), xiii-xxiii.

Burhani, on the other hand, is an approach that is based on reason through logics, social law and human sciences. This approach is also based on observation, experiments and logical laws. While *bayani* emphasises text, *burhani* put text and realities in a dialectical relation. This approach recognises that text is not independent of its surrounding contexts and is dependent on which perspective is used to interpret the texts. The use of *bayani* and *burhani* is seen as insufficient in comprehensively understanding newly-emerged Islamic thought. Therefore, *irfan* (intuition) should be introduced to give spiritual nuance of the thought. Raghīb al-Asbahani defines it as *idrak al-sya'ii bi tafakurin wa tadabburin li atsarihi*⁹³ (understanding things with a deep thinking and contemplation to gain advantage from them). The implication of adopting *irfan* in Islamic thought is a need to approach religious doctrines on the substance and its spirituality. *Irfan* will lead people to acknowledge that while differences exist, they seek a shared spirituality. The closeness to trans-historical, trans-cultural and trans-religious God is balanced with elegant empathy to others, including sensitivity to humanitarian problems, culture and civilization cultivations and that is illuminated with divine illumination.⁹⁴

Only *bayani* is practised in Muhammadiyah, while *burhani* and *irfani* are almost non-existent. This rejection is based on two factors. First, there are no sufficient explanations on the nature of the new method and there is resistance among Muhammadiyah members to accept this method. The rejection is based on the fundamental difference in understanding *irfani*. The progressives see *irfani* as

⁹³ Raghīb al-Asbahani, *Mu'jam Mufradat Alfazh al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d), 343.

⁹⁴ *Manhaj Tarjih*, p. 10.

spirituality and spirituality aspect should be adopted into law rather than emphasizing its formal legal sense. In deducting new law, for instance, Muhammadiyah should consider the spiritual aspect of the law. Spirituality can be fundamentally interpreted as willingness to make sacrifices for other people, and posses empathy.⁹⁵ The point on which conservatives reject *irfani* is that they see it as an inappropriate method of deducting law. Responding to this, Hamim Ilyas argues that this is a fundamental misunderstanding of *irfan*. As have been stated, *irfan* is spirituality, and maintaining that *irfani* method as not appropriate as a method in producing new fatawas is tantamount to stating that Islamic law excludes spiritual aspects.⁹⁶ The combination of *bayani*, *burhani* and *irfani*, is considered as following Fazlur Rahman's *ushul al-fiqh*. In older *ushul al-fiqh* it is stated: *la masagha li al-ijtihadi bima fihi nashun sarihun* (there is no ijtihad space for problems that have been clearly stated in texts). However, the problems stated in the text have significantly changed, and therefore, Muhammadiyah should radically altering older *ushul al-fiqh* into the new ones to allow flexibility when dealing with new ideas, issues and challenges. Adherence to older ways of thinking cannot resolve newly-emerged problems which have never been addressed by religious text. *Irfan*, in Ilyas' terminology is sensitivity and spirituality. When it is applied in law, it would be tracing the spiritual aspect of law. Ilyas believes that *irfan* is not utopian; rather it is part of human daily life.

The *irfani* method has been criticised as never being clearly-defined and therefore it is inappropriate to be applied in the field of Islamic law. Responding

⁹⁵ Interview with Hamim Ilyas, in Yogyakarta, 11 September 2006.

⁹⁶ Interview with Hamim Ilyas, in Yogyakarta, 11 September 2006.

to this criticism, Amin Abdullah argues, it is true that *irfan* can not be applied in the context of Islamic law since it requires social skill, emotional skills and intellectual skills. In this regard, Amin Abdullah states that those three skills are almost absent from those who approach problems with a formal legal approach. Formal legal approach gives overwhelming attention to the text and law and to some extent has the potential to overlook social sensitivity and social psychology.⁹⁷ *Irfani* is not only from God, but it can also rise from human beings. *Irfani* was rejected since it did not clearly state the criteria. Amin Abdullah responded to this fact by asserting that it is true that *irfan* is seen as unclear, because it is a method of thinking and art of producing new thought that considers three mentioned skills. *Irfani* should be returned to comprehensive Qur'anic worldview.⁹⁸

The formulation of new method in producing fresh Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah cannot be negotiated. According to Hamim Ilyas, all ideological movements will face failures. "We have seen from Islamic history that all ideological and conservative movements have failed in attracting larger audience." In the longer term, Hamim Ilyas argues, the progressives will be able to anticipate future challenges and therefore, the future of Muhammadiyah will be progressive.⁹⁹ Finally, the Manhaj describes that an appropriate relation between *bayani*, *burhani* and *irfani* is a circular relation, in which there should be an awareness of its advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses. There must also be a willingness to improve those disadvantages and weakness. By

⁹⁷ Interview with Amin Abdullah, in Yogyakarta, 12-13 September 2006.

⁹⁸ Interview with Amin Abdullah, in Yogyakarta, 12-13 September 2006.

⁹⁹ Interview with Hamim Ilyas, in Yogyakarta, 11 September 2006.

doing so, rigidity, falsity, inappropriateness can be minimised and improved. A spiral relationship, according to Manhaj has to show open-ended and inclusive results, since a belief on a close-ended thought reduce the emergence of new possibilities that could be more conducive in dealing with contemporary Islamic issues.¹⁰⁰

The above discussion illustrates that progressive Muhammadiyah's attitude toward contemporary Islamic thought is positive. Progressives believe that pluralism is part of God's scenario and therefore, cannot be denied. In their attempts to disseminate progressive ideas, some progressive activists have formed institutions that can be used to disseminate those ideas in Muhammadiyah circles.

The progressives are influenced by contemporary Muslim thinkers and philosophers. Assessing their understanding of Islamic thought, it can be asserted that they attempt to combine not only religious approaches but also social science approaches. The use of social sciences and humanities is influenced by Muslim thinkers who have previously promoted such a method such as Fazlur Rahman, Hassan Hanafi, Mohammed Arkoun and Mohammed Abid al-Jabiri.

¹⁰⁰ *Manhaj Tarjih*, p. 22.

CHAPTER V

CONSERVATIVES' RESPONSES TO PROGRESSIVE ISLAMIC THOUGHT

On December 23, 2006, Moh. Shofan, a former lecturer at Muhammadiyah University in Gresik, East Java, wrote an article on religious pluralism, or more specifically pluralism in relation to Christmas. In the article, Shofan wished a merry Christmas to Christians. This action was based on his conviction that Islam is a tolerant religion which does not regard other people or their religion as threat. He supported this by presenting historical facts regarding the Prophet Muhammad's religious tolerance.¹ Shofan was to pay a high price for his article: he was dismissed from the university. The university and Muhammadiyah's district board, who feel responsible to protect Muhammadiyah's faith from contamination,² regarded Shofan's article and his wishing merry Christmas to Christians as contrary to Islamic beliefs and a deviation from Muhammadiyah doctrines.³

Shofan's case is not unique: in January 2006, senior Muhammadiyah figure, Dawam Rahardjo met a similar fate. Dawam who had been a Muhammadiyah central board member from 1995-2005, was sacked from the

¹ See Moh. Shofan, "Natal dan Pluralisme Agama," (Christmas and Religious Pluralism), *Surya*, 23 December 2006. The same article was also published in JIL's website.

² Taufiqullah Ahmady, "Agen Pembangunan Pluralisme", (Agent of Pluralism Proliferation) http://muhammadiyah-gresik.blogspot.com/2007_02_01_archive.html.

³ "Ucapkan Selamat Natal, eh Dipecat", (Wishing Merry Christmas, Sacked) http://www.ranesi.nl/tema/masyarakat/ucapkan_natal_dipecat. See also Shofan's interview with Jaringan Islam Liberal published in *Jawa Pos*, 23 March 2007.

organization as a consequence of his 'misdeeds'.⁴ According to Din Syamsuddin, Muhammadiyah's chairman, Dawam had in effect sacked himself as he shown attitudes that did not reflect Muhammadiyah values.⁵ Among Dawam's misdeeds was his defence of Ahmadiyah.

These cases are examples of how conservatives respond to progressive Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah. Other examples exist and the details vary, but common to each case is an attempt by conservative to dominate and control Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah and keep progressive in an oppressed state. The examples also show that the contestation of conservatives and progressives in Muhammadiyah is gradually reaching a more serious level. It is no longer limited to a clash of ideas but has turned to actions which impact greatly on the careers and standing of progressive activists. Being liberal in the current Muhammadiyah context is hazardous.

In order to gain a more comprehensive picture of the conservative backlash, this chapter will present its response to the emergence of progressive Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah. In chapter IV, progressive thought in respect to two important issues of religious pluralism and *Manhaj Tarjih* were discussed. In this chapter, however, the response of conservatives will not be confined to these two topics, but will be extended to conservative attitudes toward progressive intellectual communities within Muhammadiyah, such as the Tarjih Council, JIMM, PSBPS-UMS and *Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban* (Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilization, PSAP). This is based on two reasons: firstly,

⁴ "Muhammadiyah 'Pecat' Dawam Rahardjo," (Muhammadiyah Sacked Dawam Rahardjo), *Tempo Interaktif*, 13 January 2006. See also *Media Indonesia*, 25 January 2006.

⁵ *Tempo Interaktif*, Ibid.

by understanding the conservatives' attitude toward progressives in a wider context, it can be seen that the contestation between conservative and progressive groups in Muhammadiyah is no longer a dynamic in which the two groups are on an equal standing. Rather, it has gradually been transformed into hegemony, in which one of the participating groups plays a more dominant role and discredits the other group, which is feeling subjugated.

Secondly, conservative response to progressives tends to be dogmatic and shallow. It is dogmatic in that it lacks a theoretical basis and is dominated by assertions rather than academic judgments. Their arguments are characterized by repetition and misunderstanding of liberal positions and are shallow as a consequence. The shallowness is also due to the lack of textual sources, since conservative response to progressive ideas is mostly in oral form. Even where there are good conservative doctrinal texts available, critics of progressive Islam fail to make extensive use of them. In addition, conservatives pay greater attention to technical aspects of progressive thought rather than the substances, such as the progressive groups' relations with foreign agencies and western academics which is perceived as breaking of organizational rules in Muhammadiyah. In criticizing progressive ideas, conservatives are emotional and reluctant to engage in rigorous theoretical discussion. Rather, they present ideological considerations to rebut sophisticated and philosophical arguments of the progressives.

General Response to Progressivism

In general, the rejection of progressive and liberal Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah is based on several fundamental reasons. First, Muhammadiyah is not an appropriate place for the dissemination of liberal Islamic ideas. It is believed that the ideas promoted by progressive Muslims in Muhammadiyah are not compatible with Islamic and Muhammadiyah traditions and values; and from an organizational point of view, progressive Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah does not reflect Muhammadiyah's decisions as an organization and that some of progressive Muslim communities in Muhammadiyah lack legal credibility. Second, progressive and liberal Islamic thought are seen as destroying Muhammadiyah's identity of puritan Islam values. Last of all, progressives are accused of being insensitive to Islamic faith in that they favour western interests rather than Islam.

Incompatibility

Conservatives argue that Muhammadiyah is incompatible with progressive and liberal Islamic thought due to the organization's core concern of upholding the purity of Islamic teachings and the truth of Islam as a religion. According to the conservative activist, Noval Adib, Muhammadiyah is by default indisposed to liberalism. He bases this argument on Muhammadiyah's constitution which states in the preamble: "*radlitu bi Llahi rabba wa bi al-Islami dina wa bi Muhammadin nabiya wa rasula.*" (I acknowledge Allah as my God, Islam as my religion and Muhammad as the last Messenger of God). From this declaration, Adib asserts, it

is clear that Muhammadiyah's mission is to uphold pure Islam and not other ideas such as pluralism and liberalism which progressives seek to advance in Muhammadiyah.⁶

Moreover, the liberals' promotion of contemporary ideas is viewed as a lack of confidence in being Muslim. Mu'inudinillah Basri of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta believes that the "importation" of non-Islamic ideas indicates doubt about the comprehensiveness of Islamic teachings. "If we believe that Islam has provided all things, why should we take values from the outside?" Basri asked.⁷ Similarly, Choirul Hisyam says of the emergence of liberal Muslims in Muhammadiyah, that progressives are uncertain in their faith, and this is the reason they seek to adopt new ideas.⁸

In more fundamental terms, Mustafa Kamal Pasha of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta, sees the battle over progressive ideas with Muhammadiyah ideas as due to the methods they embrace. He identifies hermeneutics as an example. According to Pasha, hermeneutics should not be applied for studying the Qur'an. He argues that it is only suitable for Biblical studies as this does not concern the words of Gods (*kalamullah*). The Qur'an, according to Pasha, has been equipped with its exegesis. Therefore, if an

⁶ For a detail exchange on the compatibility of Muhammadiyah and Islamic liberalism, see a prolonged discussion at Muhammadiyah online discussion group (Muhammadiyah_Society), especially message number 16155, 20 February 2007 under subject: "Adakah celah masuk liberalisme Islam ke dalam Muhammadiyah? (Is there chance for Islamic liberalism to grow in Muhammadiyah?) written by Noval Adib.

⁷ Interview with Mu'inudinillah Basri, head of Postgraduate Program in Islamic Studies of Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, in Surakarta, 30 September 2006.

⁸ Choirul Hisyam, "Catatan Menyambut Muktamar Muhammadiyah ke-45: Ada Pembusukan di Muhammadiyah", (There is A Decay in Muhammadiyah) *Tabligh*, Vol. 03/No.09/July 2005, p. 64-65. See also *Suara Hidayatullah*, 05/XVIII/September 2004.

interpretation is not adequate, *ta'wil*⁹ (interpretation) that is based on the interpretation of Qur'anic verses is needed.¹⁰

According to Syamsul Hidayat, a member of *Majelis Tabligh* (Predication Council) (2005-2010), the introduction of new ideas and contemporary Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah is rooted in the feeling of nervousness and hesitation within certain Muhammadiyah circles. During the last two decades Muhammadiyah has been criticised as being stagnant in its approach to Islamic thought. The progressives, Hidayat says, responded to the criticisms in a misleading way, namely advocating the adoption of new approaches. Hidayat argues that new approaches in understanding Islam will create problems for Muhammadiyah. He states: "With those new approaches, it seems that there will be new alternatives for Muhammadiyah in understanding and digesting Islam. Rather, new problems emerge."¹¹

Destroying Muhammadiyah's Pillars

These new approaches are regarded by conservative as new problems, which have the potential to destroy the central pillars of Muhammadiyah's creed.

⁹ The word *ta'wil* is derived from the root 'awwala' and also means 'explanation, interpretation'. In technical language it refers to explanation and interpretation of the Qur'an. Tafsir in the language of the scholars means explanation and clarification. It aims at knowledge and understanding concerning the book of Allah, to explain its meanings, extract its legal rulings and grasp its underlying reasons. Tafsir explains the 'outer' (*zahir*) meanings of the Qur'an. *Ta'wil* is considered by some to mean the explanation of the inner and concealed meanings of the Qur'an, as far as a knowledgeable person can have access to them. Others are of the opinion that there is no difference between Tafsir and *ta'wil*.

¹⁰ Musthafa Kamal Pasha, "Islam Liberal Meracuni kalangan Muda," *Tabligh*, Vol. 02/No. 08/ Maret 2004-Muharram 1425, h. 21.

¹¹ Syamsul Hidayat, "Respon Muhammadiyah Terhadap Liberalisme Islam" (Muhammadiyah's Response to Islamic Liberalism) Editor Prologue in Syamsul Hidayat and Sudarno Shobron (eds.), *Pemikiran Muhammadiyah: Respon Terhadap Liberalisasi Islam* (Muhammadiyah's Thought: Response to Islamic Liberalism) (Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press, 2005), xx-xxi.

In response to the introduction of liberal ideas, especially those promoted by JIMM, Goodwill Zubir, the Muhammadiyah central board secretary says: "For those who want to be creative and progressive, nobody will forbid it. But, please do not disturb the *umma*'s established faith and beliefs, do not destroy our home, Muhammadiyah, and do not become obstacles for the community of *dakwah* (predication) with confusing ideas." More explicitly, Fakrurazi Reno Sutan, the editor of *Tabligh* says that liberal ideas promoted by JIMM will endanger Muhammadiyah, split the community (*jamaah*), and destroy the unity and identity of Muhammadiyah.¹²

Consequently, conservatives see that a war of ideas (*ghazwu al-fikr*) is taking place within Muhammadiyah. According to Hidayat, in facing *ghazwu al-fikri* that manifests in various forms, one of the most appropriate responses by Muhammadiyah should be *istiqamah* (consistency) in guarding its *khittah* (identity). It is the consistency and commitment of previous Muhammadiyah leaders that have made the organization strong and the reason for its longevity and growth. Moreover, he asserts that ideological uncertainty has weakened Muhammadiyah.¹³ Chalid Sutan, grandchild of former Muhammadiyah chairman, A.R. Sutan Mansur, considers the ideas being disseminated by liberals, especially JIMM, as deviating from Islamic and Muhammadiyah doctrines set out by the founding fathers of this organization. He regards JIMM as incompatible with the

¹² "Virus Liberal di Muhammadiyah," (Liberal Viruses in Muhammadiyah), *Tabligh*, Vol. 02/No. 08/March 2004-Muharram 1425, p. 15.

¹³ Syamsul Hidayat, "Muhammadiyah dan Tantangan Ghazwul Fikri" (Muhammadiyah and the Challenge of War of Idea) supplement paper Pengajian Ramadhan PW Muhammadiyah Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, 15 October 2005

ideological outlook of Muhammadiyah figures such as Ahmad Dahlan, AR Sutan Mansur, Hamka, AR Fachruddin, Buya Malik Ahmad and Ahmad Azhar Basyir.¹⁴

According to Hidayat, one of the ideas that progressives are disseminating is secular relativism, a theory that believes in the impossibility of human beings knowing ultimate truth in religion, and only by that belief can people attain the originality and authenticity of Islamic teachings. He is anxious when the principles of Muhammadiyah as a purification movement are harmed by liberals who introduce new theories. Moreover, progressives urge Muhammadiyah to replace its puritanism principles with that of pluralism, multiculturalism and secular-liberalism. Hidayat objects to the promotion of secular relativism because the implication of such a model of thinking for Muhammadiyah is that it will loosen its principles of purification.¹⁵ Hidayat adds that the influence of secularism and liberalism has gradually eroded the commitment of Islamic purification and made Muhammadiyah inattentive of the basic aspects of Islam such as *iman* (faith), *ibadah* (worshipping), *muamalah* (social relation) and *akhlak* (Islamic ethics).¹⁶

As a purification Islamic movement, Muhammadiyah always defines itself as against *tahayul* (myth), *bid'ah* (heresy) and *churafat* (syncretism) known by the acronym TBC. It is believed by conservatives that Muhammadiyah is now facing new forms of TBC. *Tabligh* magazine, that was published in response to the

¹⁴ "Virus Liberal di Muhammadiyah," (Liberal Viruses in Muhammadiyah), *Tabligh*, Vol. 02/No. 08/March 2004-Muharram 1425, p. 17.

¹⁵ Hidayat, "Muhammadiyah dan Tantangan Ghazwul Fikri". See also Syamsul Hidayat, "Kepemimpinan Muhammadiyah" (Muhammadiyah's Leadership), *Republika*, 21 May 2005 and "Salah Tafsir Tajdid Muhammadiyah" (Misinterpretation of Muhammadiyah's Reform), *Republika*, 25 June 2005.

¹⁶ Hidayat, "Muhammadiyah dan Tantangan Ghazwul Fikri".

penetration of progressive ideas in Muhammadiyah, accuses religious liberalism as an example of new TBC. *Tabligh* reports: "Using the excuse of reforming religious understanding, they create new ideas that have never been taught by the Qur'an and Sunna, and even denigrate them. The liberals argue the originality of the Qur'an should be examined, and that Muhammad is no longer regarded as an example of true Islam."¹⁷ According to Fakhurrazi Reno Sutan, an editorial member of *Tabligh*, the introduction of these new ideas is related to the domination of philosophers on previous Tarjih Council (1995-2000 and 2000-2005). This domination, Sutan argues, has resulted in the rejection of Tarjih Council's two works by Muhammadiyah members, namely *Tafsir Tematik* (Thematic Exegesis) and the introduction of *irfani* method.¹⁸ All these issues have made the conservatives doubt progressives' commitment to Islam. "It is very hard for us to understand, if there are people who claim to be Muslim intellectuals but who criticise Muhammad's quality of Islamicity by stating that the implementation of Islam during Muhammad time is only compatible for that time and that context".¹⁹

The perception progressive thought in Muhammadiyah is problematic is also evident in the comments made by Dahlan Rais', the secretary of Muhammadiyah's Central Board. Dahlan identifies among "contemporary diseases" in Muhammadiyah are the emergence of a number of ideas that contest

¹⁷ "Muhammadiyah Diserbu Bid'ah (Lagi)" (Muhammadiyah is Attacked by Heresies [Again], *Tabligh*, Vol. 03/No. 02/September 2004 M/Rajab 1424 H, p. 40.

¹⁸ Fakhurrazi Reno Sutan, "Melepas Dominasi Filosof dalam Majelis Tarjih" (Removing Philosophers' Domination in Tarjih Council), *Tabligh* Vol. 03/No. 07/April 2005, p. 42.

¹⁹ "Intelektual Jahil Berbahaya" (Dangerous Stupid Intellectuals), *Tabligh*, Vol. 03/No. 02/September 2004, p. 36-37.

established doctrines in the organization and the introduction of contemporary issues, such as gender equality. According to Dahlan these challenges have created unrest among Muhammadiyah's members.²⁰ Similarly, Choirul Hisyam, a former chairman of the Muhammadiyah Youth Movement in Sidoarjo, East Java, argues that progressives are infected by non Islamic 'viruses' such as socialism, secularism and the like. That is, they are infected by *kafir orientalis* (unbeliever orientalist) understandings. As a result, they fear the Islamic faith and shari'a. Similarly, Fakhrurozi Reno Sutan states metaphorically, if Muhammadiyah is a body, it is now being attacked by liberal viruses. "In other words, the liberal interpretation of Islam is now like viruses that are penetrating and attacking Muhammadiyah's body," Sutan writes.²¹ Musthafa Kamal Pasha says that liberal understanding of Islam is like poison for Muslims. He asserts: "the root of the problem that leads Islam and Muslims into unresolved problems is the existence of liberal understandings of Islam."²²

Supporting Western Interests

According to Hisyam, there are several factors that have led progressives to be susceptible to these influences: The first is the lack of knowledge of Islam. Hisyam sees the progressives as having gone too far towards western orientalist thought, while lacking a deep knowledge of the Qur'an, Hadith and Islamic

²⁰ Dahlan Rais, "Mengurai Penyakit Muhammadiyah" (Explaining Muhammadiyah's Diseases), *Tabligh*, Vol. 03/06, February 2005-Dzulhijjah 1425, 50-52.

²¹ "Virus Liberal di Muhammadiyah," (Liberal Viruses in Muhammadiyah), *Tabligh*, Vol. 02/No. 08/March 2004-Muharram 1425, p. 15.

²² Musthafa Kamal Pasha, "Islam Liberal Meracuni Kalangan Muda," (Islamic Liberalism Poisons Muhammadiyah Youth) in *Tabligh*, Vol. 02/No. 08/ Maret 2004 – Muharram 1425, p. 21.

jurisprudence. “They suddenly jump onto western orientalist ideas or even become pupils of orientalists”. Second is the methodological fallacy of progressives. Hisyam judges the methodologies that progressives have been using as un-Islamic. Lastly, the materialistic factor, in which progressives are described as unable to defend themselves before materialistic temptation. “They become progressive or liberal due to the availability of funds from several foreign funding bodies,” Hisyam concludes.²³

Syamsul Hidayat identifies this as an example of Muhammadiyah’s negligence. This can be seen from its willingness to accept funding especially from non-Muslims to finance its activities even in key areas such as education (through the project of civic education with The Asia Foundation), the proliferation of *Manhaj Dakwah dan Tarjih* (such as case of cultural predication and a number of tarjih circles that were funded by the Ford Foundation) and Islamic jurisprudence studies (*fiqh perempuan* with the Asia Foundation). Muhammadiyah accepts these benefits without critically questioning the status of the funds. In addition, Hidayat asserts those bodies have been proven to spread thinking that destroys Islamic faith.²⁴

Severe criticism also comes from Ahmad Adaby Darban, deputy chief of Muhammadiyah Information Institute who labelled JIMM activists as pragmatists and money-ideologues. “For the sake of money, they are getting bolder in

²³ Choirul Hisyam, “Catatan Menyambut Muktamar Muhammadiyah ke-45: Ada Pembusukan di Muhammadiyah”, (There is A Decay in Muhammadiyah) *Tabligh*, Vol. 03/No.09/July 2005, p. 64-65. See also *Suara Hidayatullah*, 05/XVIII/September 2004.

²⁴ Hidayat, *ibid*.

deconstructing given things, and they even deconstruct the Qur'an."²⁵ According to Darban, as reported by Hidayatullah.com, one of the features of money-ideologues is their admiration of orientalist's thought and the West, on the one hand, and their attitude in problematizing the Qur'an, on the other.²⁶ In this regard, Choirul Hisyam is surprised why Muhammadiyah does not have the courage to ban liberal communities. Comparing with what occurred in NU, he made a comparison, that at the last congress in Boyolali, NU clearly prohibited and rejected *Jaringan Islam Liberal* from spreading its influence in NU; why cannot Muhammadiyah do the same thing?²⁷

"Laisa Minna (Not Our Group)"

Considering the danger that can potentially be brought by the proliferation of liberal thought, the Majelis Tabligh held a national level seminar of "*Pemikiran Muhammadiyah: Respon Terhadap Fenomena Liberalisme Islam*" (Muhammadiyah's Thought: Response to the Phenomenon of Islamic Liberalism) and published a special edition of *Tabligh* that severely attacked JIMM. In an issue entitled "*Laisa Minna: Liberalisme, Pluralisme dan Inklusivisme*" (Not Our Group: Liberalism, Pluralism and Inclusivism), *Tabligh* magazine judged JIMM activists to be involved in promoting liberal Islamic thought, pluralism and

²⁵ "Syafii Maarif Larang 'Hukum' anak Muda Muhammadiyah," (Syafii Maarif Prohibits 'Judging' Muhammadiyah Young Generation," http://www.hidayatullah.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2046&Itemid=0. Accessed on 30 April 2007.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ 'Pembusukan' di Tubuh Muhammadiyah," (A Decay in Muhammadiyah's Bodies) dalam http://www.hidayatullah.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1959&Itemid=0. Accessed on 30 April 2007.

inclusivism, and as no longer part of the Muhammadiyah big family. Consequently, "... there is no other word for them except *laisa minna*" (not our group).²⁸

The criticisms are also addressed to some of JIMM's prominent sympathisers and advisors such as Ahmad Syafii Maarif, Moeslim Abdurrahman, Amin Abdullah, Munir Mulkhan and Dawam Rahardjo as well as other institutions that have closeness and similarities in terms of their mode of thought with JIMM, such as *Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban* (Centre for the Study of Religion and Civilization, PSAP), al-Mau'n Institute, *Pusat Studi Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial* (Centre for the Study of Cultural and Social Change, PSBPS-UMS) and Maarif Institute for Culture and Humanity. The critics of Islamic liberalism in Muhammadiyah are convinced that the supporters of ideas being promoted by JIMM are in the minority. "Liberal Islam in Muhammadiyah has not become a strong trend. They are only a small number of people who are blown up by the mass media," Yunahar analyses.²⁹

In this respect, it is also worth noting Muhammadiyah universities' response to JIMM. Although JIMM's mode of thought can be considered as originating from a university setting, it does not necessarily mean that all Muhammadiyah universities see JIMM's emergence positively. As an example, the two biggest Muhammadiyah universities, namely Muhammadiyah University of Malang (UMM) and Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (UMS) present contrasting cases. While the former strongly supports JIMM activities and

²⁸ *Tabligh* Vol. 02/ No. 09/ April 2004-Shafar 1425.

²⁹ "JIMM Menyalahi Organisasi" (JIMM Breaks Organization's Rule) *Tabligh*, Vol. 02/No. 08/ Maret 2004-Muharram 1425, p. 20

initiatives, the latter is opposed. In November 2003, one month after JIMM's formation, the Muhammadiyah University of Malang sponsored the biggest workshop ever held by JIMM. In an event called *Tadarus Pemikiran Islam* (Islamic Thought Workshop), more than two hundred Muhammadiyah young intellectuals gathered in UMM to discuss recent issues in Islamic studies in general and Muhammadiyah in particular. They questioned the established discourse that is taken for granted by most Muhammadiyah members. UMM not only supported this event financially, but also assisted JIMM to spread its ideas by publishing a book from the workshop. The book called *Kembali ke al-Qur'an Menafsir Makna Zaman* (Back to the Qur'an, Interpreting Meanings of the Era) can be considered the first book setting out JIMM's manifesto.³⁰

In contrast, the Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (UMS), strongly rejected the ideas and existence of JIMM. UMS in collaboration with Majelis Tabligh, sponsored a seminar on the theme "*Pemikiran Muhammadiyah: Respon Terhadap Fenomena Liberalisme Islam*" (Muhammadiyah's Thought: A Response to the Islamic Liberalism Phenomenon). It is clear that this seminar was designed to counter the dissemination of liberal thought in Muhammadiyah, including that of JIMM. In addition, within UMS itself, there is a centre called *Pusat Studi Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial* (PSBPS or Centre for the Study of Cultural and Social Change). Having promoted progressive and liberal thought and supported JIMM's ideas, PSBPS was seriously threatened with dissolution. Yayah Khisbiyah, the founding director of the centre acknowledges that it has

³⁰ See Pradana Boy ZTF dan M Hilmi Faiq (eds) *Kembali ke al-Qur'an Menafsir Makna Zaman* (Back to Qur'an, Interpreting the Age's Meanings) (Malang: UMM Press, 2004).

been under serious pressure. It is this pressure that has aroused debate among the centre's members whether it should be maintained as part of UMS or should become an independent body. However, Yayah believes that the centre needs to be kept as part of UMS and do what she calls change from within. "When attack and resistance are strengthening, and we decide to go out, they might see this as the defeat of progressive groups," Yayah says.³¹

Religious Pluralism

As has been stated earlier, religious pluralism is one of the most sensitive issues in Muhammadiyah. Therefore, it is not surprising that the introduction of religious pluralism discourse into Muhammadiyah by progressive groups has drawn a negative reaction from conservatives. Conservatives distinguish between plurality and pluralism. Fakhurrazi Reno Sutan argues the importance of distinguishing between these two terms. "In the first instance we should make an agreement on the definition of the terms." Plurality, according to Sutan, is social realities in which human beings are created by God differently. It relates to the fact that people speak in different languages, have different cultures, and embrace different values. While pluralism is a doctrine which believes in the unity of religion. "Pluralism in the progressive understanding is different with the pluralism that we understand," Sutan argues. According to Sutan, what progressives mean with pluralism is actually plurality and not pluralism. As far as plurality is concerned, Muhammadiyah never rejected it, since it is part of human

³¹ This statement is based on personal communication with Yayah Khisbiyah.

kind's innate nature.³² Sutan asserts: "Liberals are practicing plurality that has deviated to become pluralism."

Likewise, Syamsul Hidayat also makes a distinction between pluralism and plurality. For Hidayat, if pluralism is understood as a concept that views all religions as the same, this is certainly inappropriate for Islam and Muhammadiyah. But, "if by pluralism we mean sociological pluralism, that we have to see other people positively, while we strongly believe that our only faith is Islam, this kind of pluralism is not against Muhammadiyah's principles, and this type of pluralism is plurality," Hidayat argues.³³ It is interesting that while conservatives accept plurality as given and God's design for human beings, they cannot accept when the acknowledgment of plurality is transformed into pluralism. Mu'inudinillah Basri argues that it is part of Islamic doctrine to acknowledge plurality. But, when plurality is attempted to be brought to religious pluralism context, in which all religions are same and can be one, it deviates from Islam.³⁴

Yunahar Ilyas also believes that there is a contradiction between Islam and pluralism. Like other conservatives, Yunahar also strongly rejects the introduction of religious pluralism to Muhammadiyah. "Pluralism and liberalism contradict with Islam," Yunahar declares. The contradiction of Islam and the idea of religious pluralism, can be seen from eight characteristics of Islam. First, Islam is the last link of world religions that have been revealed by God since the first prophet, Adam. Second, Islam that was brought by Muhammad is a

³² Interview with Fakhurrozi Reno Sutan, in Jakarta, 29 September 2006.

³³ Interview with Syamsul Hidayat, in Surakarta, 3 September 2006.

³⁴ Interview with Mu'inudinillah Basri, in Surakarta, 30 September 2006.

comprehensive religion that covers all aspect of human life and not only ritual aspects. Third, Islam is universal and will always be relevant whenever and wherever up to the day of judgement. Fourth, Islam corresponds with human nature. Islam never prohibits human being from fulfilling their basic needs, but it regulates how human beings gaining those needs. Fifth, Islam appreciates human reason, but reason should be put neither in the highest nor lowest position. Islam places reason as an aid and tool in understanding Qur'an and Sunnah. Sixth, Islam is a religion that teaches balance between worldly life and the hereafter life. Seventh, Islam is a *rahmatan li al-alamin* religion which means that Islam will bring peace and merits for all human beings over the globe. Lastly, Islam teaches its people on *jaza'* (reward), that a number of people will be rewarded with heaven and others will be rewarded with hell depending on their *amal* (deeds) when they are alive.³⁵

Furthermore, Yunahar argues that the only true concept of God is what is in the Qur'an and Sunnah and not those created by humans. Yunahar continues, the plurality of concepts of God does not merely refer to the difference in names and the ways of having a god, but also the substance of acknowledging having a god. If the plurality concept of God only relates to linguistic matters, it is not really a problem, since God is God in whatever language people use. But, if the differences are in broader aspects such as *sifat* (attributes) and *af'al* (deeds) Islam can not legitimize that.³⁶ Islam is the only religion that encompasses the

³⁵ Yunahar Ilyas, "Sekularisme dan Pluralism Agama Bertentangan dengan Islam (Secularism and Religious Pluralism are Against Islam), *Tabligh*, Vol. 3/8, June 2005-Jumadil Awal 1426, 60-65.

³⁶ Yunahar Ilyas, "Pluralisme Agama dalam Perspektif Islam" (Religious Pluralism in Islamic Perspective) in Syamsul Hidayat and Sudarno Shobron (eds), *Pemikiran Muhammadiyah: Respons*

comprehensive truth, Yunahar argues. However, Yunahar also admits the possibility of Islam acknowledging partial truth in other religions.³⁷

Another Muhammadiyah figure critical of religious pluralism ideas is Mustafa Kamal Pasha of Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta (UMY). He asserts that pluralism is a path that leads people beyond acknowledging the potential of other religions to have truth and being salvation,³⁸ and with that meaning, pluralism is clearly contradictory to Muhammadiyah's belief.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the progressives' view on the importance of bringing the idea of pluralism to Muhammadiyah has resulted in the publication of a book of exegesis on interreligious social interactions, *Tafsir Tematik tentang Hubungan Sosial Antarumat Beragama* (Thematic Exegesis on Interreligious Social Relationship). This book was rejected and Muhammadiyah ordered its banning. The ban was based on two reasons. First, the publication of this book is organizationally illegal, since there was no agreement on the content. While the agreement was still being sought, this book was published by certain members of Majelis Tarjih. Second, this book is not the formal view of Muhammadiyah as an organization and the content of the book contradicts

Terhadap Liberalisasi Islam (Muhammadiyah's Thought: Response to Liberalization of Islam) (Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press, 2005), 283-296.

³⁷ Yunahar, in Hidayat and Shobron, p. 293.

³⁸ Mustafa Kamal Pasha, "Wacana Pluralisme dan Liberalisasi Agama" (The Discourse of Religious Pluralism and Liberalization) in Syamsul Hidayat and Sudarno Shobron (eds.), *Pemikiran Muhammadiyah: Respons Terhadap Liberalisasi Islam* (Muhammadiyah's Thought: Response to Islamic Liberalization) (Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press, 2005), 339-358.

Muhammadiyah's formal opinion that has been published elsewhere or has been agreed in Muhammadiyah's meetings.³⁹

This is also indicated in Syamsul Hidayat's explanation on the origin of the book. According to him, the first draft was discussed in Malang Majelis Tarjih's Annual Meeting in 2000 and it did not include the phrase of "social interactions" that later became the title of the book. The phrase was created as a consensus between conservative and progressives regarding religious pluralism. In the mind of progressives, excluding "social interactions", interreligious dialogue will in effect come down to social issues. Conservatives believe that without clearly stating "social interactions", the book can be deviated to theological dialogue which can lead to the unity of religion.⁴⁰ The consensus was achieved and by accepting to include "social interactions", the Tarjih Council was obliged to revise some chapters of the book that were seen by conservatives as un-Islamic, such as allowing for interreligious marriage. According to Hidayat and Reno Sutan, the book was published without any significant revisions, except the "social interactions" phrase, appearing at the book's title and therefore drawing heated debate among Muhammadiyah members.

In addition, by "interreligious interactions" there will be many biases including that of *akidah* (faith) and bias of law. According to Hidayat, interreligious tolerance in terms of faith requires an acknowledgment that other religions have equal position before God, or in other words, while Islam is a true

³⁹ Fakhrurozi Reno Sutan, "Melepas Dominasi Filosof dalam Majelis Tarjih" (Loosening Philosophers' Domination in Majelis Tarjih), *Tabligh* Vol. 03/No. 7/April 2005-Rabiul Awal 1426, 42-43.

⁴⁰ Interview with Syamsul Hidayat, in Surakarta, 3 September 2006.

religion, other religions are also true. In terms of law, inter-religious tolerance is manifested in the permission of inter-religious marriage which Islam has clearly prohibited. Based on this reason, the draft should be revised and items on the aspects of *akidah* (faith) and law have to be omitted. "It seems to me that the objected items have not been revised or not significantly revised, and the book was published regardless to those notes," Hidayat evaluates.⁴¹ Therefore, he strongly believes that the ban of the book does not mean a rejection. Rather, it was simply a matter of procedure which the team of writers had never met.

Hidayat argues that Muhammadiyah is more sensitive than other Islamic movements in terms of *akidah*. Sensitivity of *dakwah* and *akidah* is implemented in the form of social activities that are similar to those of missionaries. "This is different with NU which to me seems not too sensitive," Hidayat says. This is what happens at the grass root level, while in academic circles, Muhammadiyah is more open. Another reason proposed by Hidayat is that Muhammadiyah's sensitivity in terms of *akidah* has led Muhammadiyah to anticipate a Christianization movement. Muhammadiyah should play the role as *akidah* guardian.⁴² It is believed religious pluralism is 'poison' as it has the potential to weaken Muhammadiyah's motivation in spreading Islam and it will make Muhammadiyah susceptible of Christian missionary or Evangelisation movements.⁴³

⁴¹ Interview with Syamsul Hidayat, in Surakarta, 3 September 2006.

⁴² Interview with Syamsul Hidayat.

⁴³ Adian Husaini, "Nasib Islam Liberal Pasca Muktamar Muhammadiyah" (The Fate of Liberal Islam Post-Muhammadiyah Congress), *Suara Hidayatullah*, Monday, 18 July 2006 http://hidayatullah.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2095&Itemid=55.

It is evident that conservatives do not reject sociological pluralism, as such. However, when considering what is regarded social and theological, conservatives and progressives are diametrically opposed. The act of wishing a merry Christmas can be presented as a good example. While progressives see it as a social action, conservatives see it is theological.

Publications produced by Muhammadiyah regarding relationships with other religious traditions, reveal several principles.⁴⁴ First, Muslims are allowed to cooperate with other religions, based on Chapter al-Hujurat: 13,⁴⁵ Chapter Lukman: 15,⁴⁶ and Chapter al-Mumtahanah: 8.⁴⁷ Second, Muslims must not mix their religion with other faiths and rituals. This principle is stated in Chapter al-Kafirun: 1-6⁴⁸ and Chapter al-Baqarah: 42.⁴⁹ Third, Muslims have to acknowledge the status of Jesus as God's apostle and messenger as Muslims acknowledge the status of other prophets. This is based on Chapter Maryam: 30-32,⁵⁰ Chapter al-

⁴⁴ Tim PP Muhammadiyah Majelis Tarjih, *Tanya Jawab Agama Jilid 2* (Questions and Answer on Religious Affairs Volume 2) (Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah, 2003), Cet. VI, 209-210.

⁴⁵ The text says: "O, mankind! We created You from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that Ye may know each other... Verily the most honoured of you I the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of You..." See, Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Maryland: Amana Corps, 1983), 1407.

⁴⁶ "But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration) and follow the way those who turn to me (in love)..." Yusuf Ali, p. 1083.

⁴⁷ "God forbid you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: For God loveth those who are just." Yusuf Ali, p. 1534.

⁴⁸ "Say: O ye that reject faith! I worship not that which ye worship; Nor will ye worship that which I worship; And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship; Nor will ye worship that which I worship; To you be your Way, and to me mine." Yusuf Ali, p. 1800.

⁴⁹ "And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the Truth when know." Yusuf Ali, p. 26.

⁵⁰ "He said: 'I am indeed a servant of God: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet; And He hath made me blessed wheresoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live; (He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable.'" Yusuf Ali, p. 773-774.

Maidah: 75⁵¹ and Chapter al-Baqarah: 285.⁵² Fourth, whoever believes that there is more than one God, that God has children and Jesus is His son, is classified as an unbeliever and *musyrik* (polytheist). This is based on Chapter al-Maidah: 72-73⁵³ and Chapter al-Taubah: 30.⁵⁴ Islam believes that there is only one God, Allah, (Chapter al-Ikhlash: 1-4).⁵⁵ And fifth, Islam teaches its people to keep distant from *syubhat* (dubious) things and from God's prohibitions. Islam also teaches its followers to prioritize the avoidance of destruction rather than seeking the *maslaha* (benefit). This teaching is based on a hadith narrated by Imam Muslim about the clarity of the *halal* (religiously permitted) and the *haram* (religiously forbidden), and between the two is *syubhat* (dubious) that can not be easily known.⁵⁶

Based on these principles and example of wishing merry Christmas, Muhammadiyah follows the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI, Indonesian Council of Clerics). MUI's fatawas (rulings) explain: first, in the Indonesian context,

⁵¹ "We ordained therein for them: 'life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, and wound equal for equal.' But if anyone remits the retaliation by way of charity, it is an act of atonement for himself. And if any fail to judge by (the light of) what God hath revealed, they are (no better than) wrong-doers." Yusuf Ali, p. 257.

⁵² "The Apostle believed in what hath been revealed to Him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in God, His Angels, His books and His apostles. 'We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His apostles'. And they say: 'We hear and we obey: (we seek) thy forgiveness, Our Lord and to Thee is the end of all journeys'". Yusuf Ali, p. 116.

⁵³ "Those who believe (in the Qur'an), those who follow the Jews (scriptures), and the Sabians and the Christians, any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, on them shall no be fear, nor shall they grieve; We took the Covenant of the children of Israel and sent them apostles. Every time there came to them an apostle with what they themselves desired not—some (of these) they called impostors, and some they (go so far as to) slay." Yusuf Ali, p. 265-266.

⁵⁴ "The Jews call 'Uzair a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the Son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what unbelievers of old used to say: God's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!" Yusuf Ali, p. 448.

⁵⁵ The text of this chapter says: "Say: He is God, The One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, Nor is forgotten; And there is none Like unto Him." See Yusuf Ali, p. 1806.

⁵⁶ Tim PP Muhammadiyah Majelis Tarjih, *Tanya Jawab Agama Jilid 2* (Questions and Answer on Religious Affairs Volume 2) (Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah, 2003), Cet. VI, 209-210.

Christmas celebration, although its basic objective is respecting Jesus, cannot be separated from above mentioned principles. Second, participating in Christmas celebrations is *haram* (forbidden) for Muslims, because it means the acknowledgment of other religions' truth. Therefore, in order to prevent Muslims from *syubhat* and God's prohibition, Muslims are advised not to participate in Christmas related activities. Based on this fatawa, especially the second principle participating in Christmas celebration is *haram* (prohibited). Wishing a merry Christmas can be classified as third principle, it is recommended that it not be done.⁵⁷

Progressives consider that wishing merry Christmas has historical precedence, a member of Muhammadiyah regional board of Gresik challenges this by saying that the arguments presented by Shofan regarding harmonious relationships between Muslims and Christian during Muhammad's life is only historical precedence that cannot be taken literally. "...All those historical facts do not have any relationship with Christmas celebration and can not be presented as basis and, moreover, recommendation to wish merry Christmas to Christians."⁵⁸

Between Dynamic and Hegemony

What can be said about the conservative response is that they have disoriented from the core issue of debate. They often create a label for the progressives without sufficient explanation and support. For example, when conservatives accuse progressive of being money-ideologues, they do not present

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 210.

⁵⁸ Taufiqullah Ahmady, "Agen Pembangunan Pluralisme", http://muhammadiyah-gresik.blogspot.com/2007_02_01_archive.html.

substantive evidence. Similarly, progressives are said to lack Islamic knowledge and adopt false methodology, but there is no sufficient elaboration or convincing argument to support this. Conservatives reject progressive issues simply because they are western-originated and do not have roots in Islamic doctrines.

There is a sense that conservatives try to misinterpret progressive arguments by presenting basic Islamic teachings as well as Qur'anic reference. However, it is not accompanied by analytical elements that enable those Qur'anic formulations to properly answer contemporary issues. Consequently, rather than convincing people on the contradiction between Islam and progressive issues such as pluralism, those arguments sound like Qur'anic narratives which are not directly relevant to the subject. Yunahar's argument for example, does not give a comprehensive understanding on which point Islam is contradictory to pluralism. Rather he presents the general concept of theology which tends to deviate from the core issue.

The same can also be said on the prohibition of wishing merry Christmas to Christians. Rather than presenting Muhammadiyah's view on the subject, conservatives propose MUI's fatwa as an answer. There is a contradiction. While conservatives responded to the publication of *Tafsir Tematik* by saying that the book was not Muhammadiyah's official view, they nonetheless present the MUI's rulings to weaken the progressive stance. By adopting the views of other organizations, conservatives have been mired in rhetorical argument that gives more emphasis on how to attract a wider audience rather than deep academic reflection. The method of exchange that conservatives adopt is that of missionary

activists. This differs from progressives who use academic formulations in articulating their ideas. Syafiq Mughni's analysis that conservatives favour simplification when dealing with such sophisticated issues, is worth presenting. Mughni argues that the contestation between conservative and progressive thought is also influenced by their social stratification. Social construction plays an important role in the process of knowledge formation.

It is clear that there are conflicting ideas within Muhammadiyah regarding several important topics. However, there has not been any acknowledgment as to what level this contestation has reached. Many Muhammadiyah intellectuals believe that the contestation is still on the dynamic level. However, after assessing recent developments in Muhammadiyah, this research finds that the contestation between conservatives and progressives is no longer an open and equal discourse but has gradually become hegemonic in that the conservatives dictate the terms of the debate. This can be seen from three indications.

First, there is a tendency among conservatives to avoid and ignore any kind of dialogue and exchange regarding ideas that are considered as deviating from Muhammadiyah's teachings and faith, such as progressive and liberal Islamic thought. For instance, progressives often attempted to explain or communicate their ideas to conservative group to lessen suspicion and mistrust. According to Syafiq Mughni, suspicion is one of the keys to explain the tension between the two groups.⁵⁹ However, these attempts are frequently hindered by the conservative's belief that only they know the truth. This can be described as one

⁵⁹ Interview with Syafiq A Mughni, Sidoarjo, 24 September 2006.

of the most prominent conservative's features, not only in the Muhammadiyah context, but also in almost any Islamic organizations. When a willingness to engage in dialogue does not exist, a complete disregard for other ideas occurs.

Secondly, a fundamental difference between progressives and conservatives is the use of "political medium". While conservatives often use political means to disseminate their ideas and to suppress progressive ideas, progressive do not take this avenue.⁶⁰ At the last Muhammadiyah congress in 2005, conservative campaigned against choosing liberal-minded figures to be members of Muhammadiyah central board. No representatives from the progressive group were elected to the new central executive board. In addition, the dismissal of a number of progressive activists clearly shows that conservatives respond progressive thought by exerting their power. Similarly, the use of organizational reasons, such as the existence of JIMM that is seen as breaking organizational rules and the ban of *Tafsir Tematik* for procedural reasons, misrepresents the progressive movement.

Thirdly, both groups have different orientations, namely while the progressives tend to have an intellectual approach, the conservatives play on ideological issues. This can be seen hegemonic, since Muhammadiyah's members prefer ideological explanations rather than intellectual ones, in responding to new ideas. As a formal organization, Muhammadiyah's members will firstly seek Muhammadiyah formal view, rather than looking at intellectual discourse. In this

⁶⁰ Amin Abdullah argues that when progressives do not use the same means as conservatives do (i.e. political), this does not mean that progressive are silent. "If we take the same militancy, so what the difference?" Abdullah asked. Progressivism, in Abdullah's term is compassionate ethic in thinking as well as acting. Interview with Amin Abdullah, 12-13 September 2006.

context, the ideological orientation of conservatives is often followed by a tendency to formalize conservative views as that of Muhammadiyah's. This can be seen in the contestation between *Suara Muhammadiyah* (Muhammadiyah Voice) and *Tabligh* Magazine. Although both are Muhammadiyah-owned publications, they present different views of Islam. *Suara Muhammadiyah* is more moderate and shows a tendency to accommodate all groups in Muhammadiyah. Conversely *Tabligh* promotes conservative views and is exclusive. *Suara Muhammadiyah* is under the Muhammadiyah central board supervision, while *Tabligh* is published by the Tabligh Council. A number of young progressives such as Mustafa W Hasyim, Zuly Qodir and Isngadi Marwah in the editorial board and *Tabligh* members argue that *Suara Muhammadiyah* is no longer Muhammadiyah's voice, but that of progressives voice. "It is *Tabligh* that now becomes Muhammadiyah's voice," says Fakhurrazi Reno Sutan.⁶¹

As this research shows the contestation has approached the level of hegemony, it is important to briefly discuss the theoretical concepts of hegemony. As a concept in political discourse, hegemony according to Antonio Gramsci, can be understood in several terms. One of them is hegemony as a consensual domination or ideological hegemony and hegemony as the exercise of leadership within historical block within a particular world order.⁶² Ideological hegemony is a more generalised description used by Antonio Gramsci as "the way in which a

⁶¹ Interview with Fakhurrazi Reno Sutan, in Jakarta

⁶² See William I Robinson, "Gramsci and Globalization: From Nation-State to Transnational Hegemony", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Dec 2005, p. 559-574.

ruling group establishes and maintains its rule”.⁶³ Further, “hegemony is a rule by consent, or the cultural and intellectual leadership achieved by a particular class, class fraction, stratum or social group, as part of a larger project of class rule or domination.”⁶⁴ Another definition of hegemony states that it is the dominance of one group over other groups, with or without the threat of force, to the extent that, for instance, the dominant party can dictate the terms of trade to its advantage; more broadly, cultural perspectives become skewed to favor the dominant group. Hegemony controls the ways that ideas become “naturalized” in a process that informs notions of common sense.⁶⁵ Milner describes it as a goal as well as a process. “Hegemony is processes by which a system of value and beliefs supportive for the existing ruling class permeates the whole of society.” Milner asserts: “Hegemony is thus a value consensus, very often embodied in common sense, but constructed, nonetheless, in the interest of dominant class.”⁶⁶

Common sense serves as an important element for the hegemon to perveade its values to the rest members of a community. It is used to the self interests of elites, but which are often attributed to public’s interest. Public often accept institutionalized customs, behavioural rules, which are spread as the absolute truth and which should not be challenged.⁶⁷ Common sense is an ambiguous, contradictive and multiform concept, and therefore referring to the

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hegemony>

⁶⁶ Andrew Millner, *Core Cultural Concept: Class* (London: Sage Publication, 1999), 49.

⁶⁷ See Thomas J Butko, “Revelation or Revolution: A Gramscian Approach to the Rise of Political Islam”, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 31 (2004), 41-62.

common sense as an affirmation of a truth is non-sense.⁶⁸ "...Dominant groups in society, including fundamentally but not exclusively the ruling class, maintain their dominance by securing the 'spontaneous consent' of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups."⁶⁹ Gramsci comments that every state, "is ethical in as much as one of its most important function is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level... which corresponds to the interests of the ruling class."⁷⁰

Hegemony is formed by the presence of several elements: the hegemon, ruling class, dominant values, common sense, and the medium by which the hegemon's value is imposed. Ideological hegemony is the most suitable to be employed in order to analyse Muhammadiyah's case. If Muhammadiyah's current situation is analysed, some of the conditions for the establishment of hegemony can be seen. Using Antonio Gramsci's formulation in which hegemony is described as the tendency of the ruling groups to maintain their established rule, this tendency is evident in the Muhammadiyah. No progressives are among the thirteen core members of Muhammadiyah central board, but the composition of moderate and conservative figures is balanced. However, at lower leadership level, the domination of conservatives is stronger and in this level, conservatives can be classified as the ruling class.

⁶⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebook* (trans. Q Hoare and G. Nowell Smith) (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 243.

⁶⁹ Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1995), 165.

⁷⁰ Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebook*, p. 258.

In terms of dominant values, conservative and puritan Islamic views serve as the dominant values in the current Muhammadiyah context, although a decade ago progressive thought are more tolerated and even well-disseminated. It is not surprising that progressive Islamic thought is considered as a to Muhammadiyah community. The labels that are being attributed to progressives such as money ideologue intellectuals, orientalist's followers and the carrier of new form TBC (*tahayul*, *bid'ah* and *churafat*) to contemporary Muhammadiyah clearly show that the progressive value is situated in the periphery of Muhammadiyah value system. The pressure to progressive, as can be seen from several examples above, is carried out through political and ideological medium, in which progressive as an oppressed groups have no access.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this thesis is not to describe the history of Muhammadiyah or its political activities but rather to highlight recent developments regarding Islamic thought, particularly the conflicting views of conservatives and progressives. In the foregoing chapters, I have described the rise of Islamic conservatism driven by a range of internal and external factors. This conservative turn has aroused anxiety among progressive Muslims and has led to the formation of progressive groups to counteract this. Ironically, the progressive activism has created a feeling among conservatives that Islam is under growing threat from “deviant” ideas. This has further intensified the tension between the two groups.

The doctrinal tensions between conservatives and progressives in Muhammadiyah arise from the same point of departure: puritanism. Muhammadiyah defines its puritan (reform) doctrines as purification and dynamization. Purification is formulated as purifying Islamic faith from local tradition influences and religious innovations which did not derive from the Prophet. Dynamization, on the other hand, is a context in which Muhammadiyah articulates Islamic doctrine in response to progress. Ideally, these two concepts would enable Muhammadiyah to respond appropriately to contemporary situations, whilst maintaining its basic tenets as a puritanical Islam movement.

Purification and dynamization should be carried out simultaneously. If purification is not accompanied by dynamization it will lead to scripturalism; and a dynamization which is not based on purification, will lose its textual basis. In this context, conservatives are inclined to interpret Muhammadiyah's reform in terms of purification. Consequently, they show a tendency to resist contemporary ideas which should be considered under the notion of dynamization. Conversely, progressives prefer dynamization and in so doing have moved away from Muhammadiyah's puritan doctrines. Consequently, both groups show diverging responses to the same issue.

The sharpening debate between conservatives and progressives in Muhammadiyah can be traced to a deeper debate about whether the organization is stagnating in responding to newly-emerging issues. The 43rd Muhammadiyah Congress in Aceh in 1995 saw a formal response by giving a new orientation to the Tarjih Council. The council had previously mainly responsible for dealing with problems relating to Islamic law. The new orientation enabled the council to deal with contemporary issues in Islamic thought by developing new approaches and disseminating Islamic thought within this organization.

The council formulated a methodology which it hoped would provide Muhammadiyah with a means of responding to new challenges. The methodology was called The Methodology of Tarjih and Dissemination of Islamic Thought (*Manhaj Tarjih dan Pengembangan Pemikiran Islam*). It comprised of three main components of *bayani* (textual), *burhani* (demonstrative), and *irfani* (intuitive).

In addition to the Tarjih Council becoming site of progressive thought, other liberal groups within Muhammadiyah emerged, including the Muhammadiyah Young Intellectual Network (*Jaringan Intelektual Muda Muhammadiyah* or JIMM). JIMM believes that in addition to stagnation in Islamic thinking, the growing conservatism in Muhammadiyah also needs addressing through liberal activism. JIMM promotes progressive Islamic thought within Muhammadiyah and critiques the organization's conservative propensity.

While the reorientation of Tarjih and progressive communities were intended to address the perceived stagnation within Muhammadiyah, it aroused backlash from conservatives who see it challenging Muhammadiyah's cherished puritan ideals. The progressive group has influence in the Tarjih Council, whereas the conservatives are mainly associated with the *Majelis Tabligh* (Propagation Council). Conservatives oppose progressive ideas by arguing that Muhammadiyah should be protected from 'infidel' influences such as progressive Islamic thought and the Islamic liberalization.

Three main factors account for the emergence of conservatism in Muhammadiyah. The first is political and relates primarily to the penetration of Muhammadiyah by Islamist groups. This has led to the growing alliance between political Islam and puritan Islam social movements. The second is ideological. Muhammadiyah is influenced by Wahhabi teachings. The adoption of Wahhabism has led Muhammadiyah to be accepting of Middle Eastern conservative discourses. Consequently, Muhammadiyah tend to take for granted all Middle Eastern thinking. Ideological factor strengthen Muslim identity in response to the impact of

globalization. The third factor is education. Muhammadiyah figures who have been educated in Middle Eastern universities tend to be conservative. This relates to the scriptural and textual tradition that they receive during their training. In addition, inclination of conservative is also greatly shaped by their readings and interactions after returning to Indonesia.

The conflicting views of conservatives and progressives are clear from two issues: religious pluralism and the *Manhaj Tarjih*. Progressives see Muhammadiyah as resistant to religious pluralism ideas. They argue, pluralism means an acknowledgment of other religious traditions as having the potential to achieve the truth just as Islam does. Religious differences, according to them, occurs only at a “material” level, while at the spiritual level all religions are expressions of the same ultimate truth. Progressives urge Muhammadiyah to respond positively to the discourse for two reasons: first Muhammadiyah’s founder Ahmad Dahlan showed a positive attitude toward Christianity; and second as a modernist organization, it should be open to new ideas, including that of religious pluralism. Considering the importance of the issue and Muhammadiyah’s resistance to it, the Tarjih Council composed a Qur’anic exegesis on pluralism aimed at changing attitudes of the organization’s members. The book argues that the Qur’an acknowledges religious pluralism and that Islam is compatible with this idea.

In contrast, conservatives respond by arguing that progressives are attempting to merge Islam with other religions, since religious pluralism, in their mind, is perceived as the unity of religions. According to them, Islam is a uniquely true

religion and this is clearly stated in the Qur'an. It is interesting that the conservative response to the progressives is not confined to the intellectual differences, but is extended to organizational matters. Progressives are accused of working with the 'enemies' of Islam and of lacking sufficient understanding of Islam. As a result they misinterpret Islam in a way that contradicts Islamic teachings. They therefore assert that progressives deviate from the creed set out in Muhammadiyah's statute.

When assessing the debate between conservative and progressive groups, it can be concluded that both groups show different tendencies in articulating the issues. In presenting their ideas, progressives show a relatively high intellectual standard. They usually support their argumentation with reliable sources from at least three types of sources: classical Islamic discourse, contemporary Islamic thought and modern social sciences, including from the West. The conservatives, in contrast, often put forward shallow analytical argumentation in responding to progressive ideas and in most cases, their criticisms betray a lack understanding of liberal positions. Therefore, as chapter 5 shows, conservatives usually do not respond cogently to progressive ideas. Rather, they propose dogmatic explanations which fail to address specific points raised by progressives. Consequently, the debate is often asymmetrical.

The intellectual imbalance is not only related to the manner of argumentation, but also the use of political means. Many progressives argue conservatives seek to suppress and retaliate against their ideas. Their retaliation can be seen in the dismissal of several Muhammadiyah activists on the ground of deviation from Muhammadiyah

teachings and the ousting of progressive scholars from the Muhammadiyah central board. The dismissals were mainly based on ideological reasons. From this point, this research concluded that the contestation of conservative is becoming hegemonic in the sense that one group seeking to subordinate and marginalize a rival group.

Conservative and progressive activists adopt different strategies. In the middle and lower level, progressive views are less publicized and their use of intellectualised language is not easily grasped by members. Conservatives, on the other hand, use simple and practical languages with “black and white” characterisation of right and wrong that can attract members sympathy. Progressives are mostly university based, while conservatives are based in mosques or other public religious institutions. According to Syafiq Mughni, the conservatives dominate religious forum such as sermons and study circles, while progressives use “hit and run” strategies in communicating their ideas. In this regard, conservative activists are closer to Muhammadiyah’s grassroot and have a strong social basis, while progressives are likely to lack support from Muhammadiyah’s members and do not have significant mass basis.

The strategies employed to convey their opposing ideals will determine the futures of the conservative and progressive groups. Conservatives will continue gain and hold support as their interaction with Muhammadiyah members is more effective at spreading conservative ideas while simultaneously discrediting progressive concepts. Support for the progressive is confined mainly to an erudite following. It will become necessary for the to change their strategies to convey their ideals to a

broader audience, using more practical method. Without change, progressive Islamic thought in Muhammadiyah is likely to remain on the margins.

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GLOSSARY

<i>Af'al</i>	: Deeds
<i>Amal Usaha</i>	: Muhammadiyah's units which provide public services in the field of social, economy, education and health
<i>Aqidah</i>	: Islamic faith
<i>Bayani</i>	: Textual approach in Islamic law
<i>Burhani</i>	: An approach in Islamic law that give emphasis on realities as the source of knowledge
<i>Bid'ah</i>	: Heresy, Innovations
<i>Catatan Akhir Pekan</i>	: Weekend Note
<i>Churafat</i>	: Syncretism
<i>Dewan Imamah Nusantara</i>	: A group of Muslim elders, including leader of Langitan Islamic Boarding School. This group was set up in National Congress of Muslim Clerics on 22 December 2005 Pasuruan, East Java
<i>Da'wa</i>	Predication
<i>Dzu wujuh</i>	: Literally "multi-faced." This term is used to describe many orientations in Muhammadiyah, whether ideological, political or social.
<i>Fatwa</i>	: Rulings by an Islamic scholar on a religious question
<i>Fiqh Perempuan</i>	: Islamic jurisprudence on women-related affairs
<i>Front Pembela Islam</i>	: Islamic Defenders' Front
<i>Ghazwu al-fikr</i>	: War of ideas
<i>Hanif</i>	: Straight

<i>Halal</i>	: Religiously admitted
<i>Haram</i>	: Religiously forbidden
<i>Ibadah Mahdhah</i>	: Specific worshipping
<i>al-Ibtikari</i>	: Creation
<i>Ijtihad</i>	: Legal reasoning. Usually used in response to the newly-emerged problems
<i>Ijtihad Jama'iy</i>	: Collective legal reasoning
<i>Ikhbari</i>	: Knowledge attributed to God's revelation
<i>Irfani</i>	: An approach in Islamic thought that emphasizes the use of intuition
<i>al-Ilm al-Istighrab</i>	: Occidentalism
<i>Ittiba'</i>	: A conscious adherence to one of Islamic jurisprudence schools
<i>Jaza'</i>	: Rewards
<i>Kafir dzimmi</i>	: Protected non-believers is non-Muslims who are protected by Islamic law as a reward of their obedience to Islamic law, not as Muslims but as citizens
<i>Kafir harbiy</i>	: Non-Muslims who live in an Islamic state, but who are hostile to Islamic law that also serves as state's law.
<i>Kalimah al-sawa'</i>	: Common platform
<i>Khittah</i>	: Basic identities, charter
<i>Kristen Putih</i>	: White Christians. This is used to describe Ahmad Dahlan as his was very close to Christians
<i>Laisa Minna</i>	: Literally "not our group". Usually used to label outsiders
<i>Lembaga Pengkajian Agama dan Masyarakat</i>	: Institute for the Study of Religion and Society
<i>Manhaj Tarjih</i>	: A methodological approach formulated by

	1995-2000 Tarjih Council to respond the criticism of Muhammadiyah's stagnation in Islamic thought.
<i>Majelis Tabligh</i>	: A Muhammadiyah sub-committee responsible for predication activities in Muhammadiyah.
<i>Majelis Tarjih</i>	: A Muhammadiyah sub-committee responsible for resolving legal problems
<i>Majelis Ulama Indonesia</i>	: Indonesian Council of Muslim Clerics
<i>Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia</i>	: Indonesian Council of Jihad Fighters
<i>Maslaha</i>	: Goods, Virtue
<i>Masyarakat Utama</i>	: Leading Society
<i>Muktamirin</i>	: Participants of the congress
<i>al-Mura'ah</i>	: Conservation
<i>Musyrik</i>	: Polytheist
<i>Nazhari</i>	: Theoretical
<i>al-Nushush al-diniyya</i>	: Religious texts
<i>Partai Keadilan Sejahtera</i>	: Prosperous Justice Party
<i>Pusat Studi Agama dan Peradaban</i>	: The Centre for Religious and Civilization Studies
<i>Pusat Studi Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial</i>	: Centre for the Study of Social and Cultural Changes
<i>Pusat Studi Islam dan Filsafat</i>	: Centre for Islamic and Philosophical Studies
<i>Al-Qira'ah al-Muntijah</i>	: Productive reading (of religious text)
<i>Al-Qira'ah al-Mutakarirrah</i>	: Repetitive reading (of religious text)
<i>Sifat</i>	: Attributes
<i>Suara Muhammadiyah</i>	: Literally "Muhammadiyah's Voice". It is a name of official magazine of the organization.
<i>Sunnatullah</i>	: Natural law
<i>Syubhat</i>	: Dubious

<i>Ta'aqulli</i>	: Process of human reasoning
<i>Ta'aruf</i>	: Knowing each other
<i>Tadarus Pemikiran Islam</i>	: Islamic Thought Workshop
<i>Tahayul</i>	: Myth
<i>al-Tahdithi</i>	: Innovation
<i>Taklid</i>	: Imitative Conformism
<i>Tauhid sosial</i>	: Social theology
<i>Ushul al-Fiqh</i>	: Principles of Islamic law. Also known as the philosophy of Islamic law
<i>Uslub</i>	: Styles
<i>Zakat Profesi</i>	Professional almsgiving